

# CHINA'S TREATMENT OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS

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## ROUNDTABLE

BEFORE THE

### CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 11, 2013

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# CONTENTS

## STATEMENTS

	Page
Opening Statement of Hon. Sherrod Brown, a U.S. Senator from Ohio; Chairman, Congressional-Executive Commission on China .....	1
Wong, Edward, Correspondent, the New York Times, Beijing Bureau .....	4
Beech, Hannah, East Asia Correspondent and China Bureau Chief, TIME .....	5
Dietz, Robert, Asia Program Coordinator, Committee to Protect Journalists ....	7
Cook, Sarah, Senior Research Analyst for East Asia, Freedom House .....	9

## APPENDIX

### PREPARED STATEMENTS

Wong, Edward .....	30
Dietz, Robert .....	31
Cook, Sarah .....	36

### SUBMISSION FOR THE RECORD

Written Statement of Paul Mooney, Freelance Journalist .....	41
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# CHINA'S TREATMENT OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE  
COMMISSION ON CHINA,  
*Washington, DC.*

The roundtable was convened, pursuant to notice, at 3:31 p.m., in room SVC 203–202, Capitol Visitor Center, Senator Sherrod Brown, Chairman, presiding.

Present: Lawrence Liu, Staff Director; Paul Protic, Deputy Staff Director; and Jesse Heatley, Senior Research Associate.

## **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SHERROD BROWN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO, CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Chairman BROWN. Thank you for joining us today for this roundtable. This is either our fourth or fifth roundtable like this, usually staff-led, and today will mostly be staff-led by the Staff Director, Lawrence Liu, who is as good as they come on understanding and bringing questions out and listening to people and reporting and making a big difference that way.

This one is as important as any we have done. I have to preside, in about a half an hour, over the Senate, so I will be leaving. But I wanted to kick it off and introduce each of the panelists and announce, first of all, that the media organizations have come here today at our request. They didn't seek us out, we asked them to come—each of them to come. We're appreciative of all that could join us today because we have a lot we need to know and a lot to learn. I think they probably will have a lot to say.

When I think how far they came to get here—Edward is based in Beijing, Hannah is based in Beijing and has come down from New York, as have Bob and Sarah. Paul Mooney, who was originally scheduled, is in San Francisco, and couldn't join us because of health issues.

His record as a freelance journalist has shed such light on what's happened in the People's Republic of China. He is a Vietnam War vet that kind of fell in love with that part of the world and has devoted much of his life there. He has submitted a statement and I believe he is watching this livestream in some way or another.

We are calling on China immediately, this Commission and all of us in the Senate and House that care about these issues, to immediately cease its policy of harassing foreign journalists, period. They have denied and delayed visas, they have blocked Web sites of foreign media in China.

That is not the way to be integrated into the world economy and in the world generally. We ask and demand that China back off this policy. If the situation does not improve, we will consider other steps that Congress may take to address this issue.

Our approach is critical. China, as we all know, is the world's most populous nation. It is the United States' second leading trade partner. It faces daunting challenges. We know the challenges facing China, everything from crippling pollution and widespread corruption to suppression of basic freedoms we have taken for granted. And, as we have seen most recently but for some time, China is increasing its military posture in the region. The whole point is, what happens in China affects the United States, affects the world community—Africa, Asia, North America, South America, and all the world.

Therefore, it is imperative that foreign journalists, that journalists worldwide, get an opportunity to travel freely in the People's Republic of China and report back what they are seeing and what they are hearing and help to paint a picture, as good journalists are able to do, about what is going on there. We cannot get that picture, we cannot get an accurate depiction or accurate picture, without foreign journalists.

My wife is a journalist. She has for years helped to educate me about the importance, whether it is investigating corruption or whether it is shining a light on people's lives or whether it is watching government and business and the way they act in the marketplace, the political marketplace and the economic marketplace. We know that this panel of journalists up here paints that picture.

Who will report on what is happening with the Uyghurs, who will report on Tibet, who will report on the plight of human rights activists if not foreign independent journalists? Who will investigate labor conditions in factories? We know that we buy so much in this country made in the People's Republic of China.

Under what conditions are those products made? It has to be the foreign press because we know that with the attitude of the government, the People's Republic of China, that China's own journalists are hamstrung by severe censorship. That is why the recent actions from the government to shut down foreign journalists is so troubling.

What is happening now has few precedents in China or anywhere else. If 23 reporters do not get their visas by the end of the year, the New York Times and Bloomberg may not be able to cover China at all. Imagine that. Those two very respected worldwide news organizations who have reporters darned near everywhere will not be able to paint that picture of China, whatever that picture might be in the coming months.

China has now made this a fair trade issue by blocking access to the Web sites of the New York Times, of Bloomberg, and the Wall Street Journal, of Reuters. In November, Chinese officials denied a visa to the journalist whom I mentioned earlier who is watching from San Francisco, Paul Mooney, after he had been reporting there for 18 years.

For years, foreign journalists have had to operate not in the safest or the easiest or the best conditions, having to endure peri-

odic beatings, interrogations, and harassment just to do the job that journalists worldwide should be able to do without those kinds of burdens.

But what is new is that China is now threatening to use its weapon of last resort, actually closing the country off to the rest of the world. That is why we must do all we can to prevent that. That is why we asked—Larry, I, and Cochairman Smith asked—these news organizations and these individuals to appear on this panel today at our request, and fortunately they have agreed to do it.

I will introduce the panelists all at once and then, Mr. Wong, I will start with you and we will work our way down this way.

Edward Wong is a correspondent for the New York Times in the Beijing bureau. He's been with the Times since 1999. He was previously a correspondent in Baghdad, covering the Iraq War from 2003 to 2007. He received a Livingston Award for his Iraq coverage. He was among a group of reporters from the Times' Baghdad bureau named as finalists for the Pulitzer Prize in International Reporting.

The second panelist is Hannah Beech, East Asia correspondent and China Bureau Chief for Time Magazine. She covers politics, conflicts, culture, diplomacy, and other regional issues from a base in Beijing. She joined Time in 1987 as a reporter in Hong Kong, and later spent time in Shanghai and Bangkok.

She is one of the few international journalists to report widely from Burma, and she has won numerous reporting awards, including being named Journalist of the Year by the Society of Publishers in Asia in 2011.

Bob Dietz is the Asia program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists. He has held that position since 2006. Mr. Dietz previously worked as a journalist in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the United States. He has served as Bureau Chief for NBC News in Seoul and Manila, and was senior editor of Asia Week Magazine for seven years.

Last, we are lucky to have Sarah Cook, Senior Research Analyst for East Asia at Freedom House. Ms. Cook has appeared before our Commission a number of times and recently authored an important report on how the Chinese Communist Party's media restrictions affect news outlets around the world. She is the author of several articles and numerous country reports examining press freedom and democratic governance.

I think that all of these journalists have probably a number of things in common, and one of them is courage. You have listened to where they have been stationed, where they've reported, no easy assignments. Oftentimes they're in harm's way. They are in many ways like the soldiers we send overseas, and sometimes with fewer protections than they have. For that, we are also grateful for your service to our country and to the world by what you do.

So Mr. Wong, if you would begin. Each of you will take five minutes, please, around five minutes, and then Lawrence Liu will begin the questions after that.

**STATEMENT OF EDWARD WONG, CORRESPONDENT, THE NEW YORK TIMES, BEIJING BUREAU**

Mr. WONG. Thank you, Senator. I will open with a statement from the New York Times, the institution. It is not a statement from myself, it is a statement that is signed by Joe Abramson, our executive editor.

In the last year, the New York Times and other major foreign news organizations have been confronted with deteriorating conditions for doing journalism in China. The Communist Party and Chinese Government have stepped up their efforts to shape news coverage and suppress stories they find objectionable, applying pressure in various forms and inarguably unprecedented fashion.

The situation is the most serious in years and poses an urgent threat to our ability to report freely and comprehensively on the world's second-largest economy. Most recently, Chinese officials have halted the regular year-end renewal process for the residency visas of nine Times journalists. If the renewal process does not go forward, these journalists and their families will be forced to leave China before the end of the year.

With the first visas expiring in less than two weeks, the Times could be left without reporters in Mainland China for the first time in nearly three decades. The Chinese Government has also refused, for many months, to provide visas for two journalists hired for the Beijing Bureau by the Times.

Philip Pan, the incoming bureau chief, has been waiting for more than a year and a half. Chris Buckley, who was hired from Reuters in the fall of 2012, had to leave Beijing one year ago when his visa from his previous employer expired and the government declined to provide a new one for the Times.

He has been forced to live in Hong Kong, apart from his wife and daughter who reside in Beijing. In addition, China has blocked access to the Web sites of the Times, including a new Chinese-language site, since the October 2012 publication of a report on the hidden wealth of family members of the Prime Minister at the time.

This severely hampers our ability to provide quality journalism to readers in Chinese. This fall, we started an online Chinese-language version of T Magazine, the Times' culture and lifestyle publication, only to have that blocked in November after publication of other stories that the authorities deemed unacceptable.

In conversations in the last year with the Times, Chinese officials have pointedly objected to articles that explore the intersection between elite politics and the economy. In other words, they are asking the Times and other media organizations to refrain from the kind of reporting that we do in every part of the world, including in the United States.

As China's economy becomes more deeply intertwined with that of the United States and other nations, covering the full range of issues in the country becomes increasingly important.

Senior executives at the Times have tried to explain our mission and our viewpoint to Chinese officials. The Times increased those efforts last year when our Web sites were blocked and our visa applications for new journalists frozen.

Despite our attempts at dialogue and at resolving misunderstandings, Chinese officials continue to treat coverage in the Times as hostile. We find ourselves at an unusually uncertain moment, one that involves our core principles of open journalist inquiry and also our ability to reach the large and news-hungry online audience in China.

The Times remains committed to coverage of China. We have invested great resources in this and we have demonstrated a willingness to report on all aspects of China, its politics, economy, foreign policy, environment, culture, sports, even fashion.

We will continue to report on China even if our journalists are expelled from the country, though the range in depth of our coverage will suffer, as would our readers' understanding of China. We also worry that expulsions would have a profound chilling effect across news media organizations.

As always, we are willing to work with all parties to ensure that we can remain engaged with China while performing our journalistic mission. That has been the goal of the Times in China since the country's leaders embraced a policy of reform and opening up decades ago.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wong appears in the appendix.]

**STATEMENT OF HANNAH BEECH, EAST ASIA  
CORRESPONDENT AND CHINA BUREAU CHIEF, TIME**

Ms. BEECH. Thank you, Senator, again, for inviting me to participate in this roundtable discussion. First of all, a little bit of background. I have been accredited as a foreign correspondent in China since 2000, the whole time with TIME Magazine. Since then, despite some hassles, I have had no problem getting approval from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to live and work in China, despite writing articles that obviously displease the Chinese authorities.

I know that these certain articles have displeased the authorities because I have been called in multiple times in both Beijing and Shanghai and lectured about my coverage. At one point I was called in twice in quick succession for stories that I had written, one on a little-known HIV crisis in rural China and another on baby smuggling in southwestern China.

I was told by my Foreign Ministry handler that I had two strikes, and the next time I would be out. I suppose I could compliment the Chinese official for his knowledge of baseball. The threat of expulsion was made quite overtly, however, I have never compromised my coverage and I was never thrown out of China.

Chairman BROWN. Can I interrupt you for a second?

Ms. BEECH. Yes.

Chairman BROWN. Do you feel physical threat, physical danger, or do your colleagues when they are called in on articles like that, or it never gets to that?

Ms. BEECH. You are meeting in the Foreign Ministry in these very big chairs with doilies, antimacassars, on the side that make you feel quite small. But no, I didn't feel any sense of physical intimidation.

Chairman BROWN. All right.

Ms. BEECH. Just to continue, two years ago I wrote an article on self-immolations in Tibetan regions of China. I snuck into an area where foreign journalists were technically off limits. As a consequence of that, my annual visa renewal process two years ago dragged on and on. My handler at the Foreign Ministry mysteriously could not meet with me, even though those days he could meet with somebody else.

He also, when we finally did meet, sent me to a lecture on Tibetan Buddhism and all the things that I had apparently misunderstood about Tibetan Buddhism. I was offered what I would call a polite, but relatively pointed, critique of my China coverage.

I was finally given an appointment to reapply for my visa on December 31, which was exactly the same day that my visa expired. I was pretty confident that my visa would be renewed, but it made me sweat a little bit.

Like many foreign journalists in China, I presume that my phone is tapped and email monitored. My email account was obviously hacked when I was in Dharamsala in India where the Tibetan government-in-exile is based.

I've been followed, obviously, and presumably also not so obviously. I have had a Chinese assistant beaten for working for me, and sources jailed. In fact, Chen Guangcheng, the blind legal advocate who now resides in the United States, met with me in Beijing just hours before he was subjected to years of detention.

Having said all this, my general feeling is that compared to 2000 when I first started working for TIME in China, it is easier to operate as a foreign journalist in China. It used to be that we were supposed to get permission from the Foreign Ministry every time we left the city where we were accredited.

In point of fact, it was quite hard to get that permission so foreign journalists basically ignored the rule. But it meant occasionally if you were stuck in a place and caught in a place where you were not supposed to be, that you would have to write what were called self-criticism letters to explain your behavior.

In 2008, I think things got significantly better for the foreign media operating in China. The rules changed and we were allowed to travel to most places within the country without permission. I think there was a general feeling of more openness, not just for journalists but for NGO workers and other members of civil society.

But as the Arab Spring ignited and presumably sparked fears in China about social unrest at home, things have tightened again. The crackdown has not just affected foreign media. Dozens of dissidents, scholars, and academics, Chinese journalists, and others have been jailed or intimidated, suffering fates much worse than the foreign press has experienced.

The treatment of my colleagues at Bloomberg, the New York Times, Reuters, Paul Mooney, and Al Jazeera, as well as brave Chinese who have independent voices against injustice, is for me very deeply concerning.

I will close with another sports analogy which may please my former handler at the Foreign Ministry: I think the ball is in their court and I hope they know how to play it well.

Thank you very much.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT DIETZ, ASIA PROGRAM  
COORDINATOR, COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS (CPJ)**

Mr. DIETZ. Thank you very much, Senator. Thanks for the opportunity.

I have prepared remarks which are available outside. I'm just going to tear through some of these quickly and make some of the more important points. Many of them have already been made by Edward and Hannah.

The general feeling in China is, with the arrival of President Xi Jinping's government in 2012, foreign journalists based in China have come under more pressure.

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China from whom I will be drawing a lot of information said, about the visa problem that not just Bloomberg and The New York Times are facing them, but other journalists, such as Paul Mooney, Melissa Chan, and others. The authorities are giving no public explanation for their actions, leading to the impression that they have been taken in reprisal for reporting that displeased the government.

China's officials have said that foreign media in China must abide by Chinese laws and regulations, but they have never explained which laws and regulations those are. This information comes from the Foreign Correspondents Club of China, which has about 200 members.

Unease around visa renewals has long been a problem in China. In the past, journalists have always applied for visas in November and December and have generally gotten them later in December. A journalist visa expires a year after the day it is issued and if, say, they are issued a visa on December 15, then next year it will expire on December 14.

Larger organizations with many employees submit visas on different dates, each with a different expiration date, so visas are very often a rolling problem for them.

Under new rules announced in June and July, all visas, not just those for journalists, must go through a screening by the Public Security Bureau [PSB], and that could take up to 3 weeks, 15 business days, the PSB made clear. At the time there were a lot of complaints from journalists, but these visa rules also applied to any other foreigners working in China—it was not just a change directed at journalists.

The Public Security Bureau, when they made this announcement, said that they would try and expedite visas and try not to cause problems.

As one journalist who worries that their visa will not be renewed told me, the big question right now is, are the Chinese authorities bluffing? From what that one journalist can determine, there is no real way to tell beyond waiting it out.

This sort of situation creates real logistical issues for many reporters. If the government decides on the day before the visa's expiration date that the journalist can stay, the journalist may have already shipped everything home, have taken their kids out of school, and basically gotten ready to leave the country.

I should make this clear, too: Despite having Edward and Hannah here, many of the journalists with whom I spoke in China did not want to have their names used and requested anonymity.

This visa problem is not something new. Officials do not offer any information or notion of directive from above when they hand down their decision on visas. As one journalist said, we are just sitting there waiting in visa purgatory with endless phone calls and no confirmation.

I will move on here quickly.

Chairman BROWN. Can I ask one question about that, Mr. Dietz?

Mr. DIETZ. Yes.

Chairman BROWN. Is there any place else you've been, or your colleagues have been around the world, where the visa process is so sort of precipitous or a similar problem?

Mr. DIETZ. I had a similar problem in 1981 in Somalia. This does happen in other countries. It is not played as well as it is in China and very often people are left hanging, unable to plan, and organizations are unable to plan on the number of staff and stabilize the size of the staff they have. I think it is less systematic other places. I mean, there's obviously a system working here. I think we would all agree in saying that this works.

Chairman BROWN. At least it's predictably difficult.

Mr. DIETZ. You know you're going to have this problem at the end of the year and with this new addition of having the Public Security Bureau involved it's gotten more complex.

But frankly, all the journalists I've spoken with don't know, including the New York Times and Bloomberg, what is going to happen. We are seeing that 24 journalists might or might not be expelled, but in fact it's might or might not be expelled. They're in this visa purgatory, visa limbo, if you will, that there's no way to resolve.

I'm running close on time and I'm going to go to the very end of my speech and address an issue which hasn't come up, and I think, Senator, you and I might disagree on, but let's see.

CPJ is glad that Vice President Joseph Biden raised the issue of visas and their link to the freedom to report in China while he was there earlier this month. Diplomatic engagement like that is the best way to address such problems, but CPJ is concerned by new calls that if foreign journalists in China are not granted visa renewals, that there should be retaliation from the United States.

There was a Washington Post editorial to that effect on December 8 entitled "China's Strong-Arm Tactics Toward U.S. Media Merit a Response." It is worthwhile to note that the Foreign Correspondents Club of China opposes such tactics as not appropriate.

In 2012, last year, we opposed a similar act directed against Chinese journalists by the Voice of America, who protested that they were only allowed to have two journalists stationed in China, while there are many, many Chinese journalists in the United States basically working for the same sort of state media.

At the time we said don't punish journalists for these official bureaucratic problems. Instead, either deal with them diplomatically or deal with it at the level of the bureaucrats and not the journalists, not the working people who are on the ground.

I will finish this quickly. I have seven seconds. China says that it has allowed 682 journalists to work within its borders, and not just those from the United States. That number seems realistic, though there is no way to check it. There are a growing number

of Chinese journalists working around the world and not just in the United States as China seeks to extend its soft diplomatic power. It would be disastrous if democratic countries were to launch a round of modern-era Cold War tit-for-tat accreditation wars aimed at restricting the access of foreign journalists in foreign countries.

I checked recently with a Chinese journalist based in the United States, who I know fairly well. That person said there are no visa problems for Chinese journalists working here, as far as that person is aware. Visa applications are handled from Beijing, the reporter told me, and other than the face-to-face interview with the immigration official, journalists are not involved in the process and there are no hassles for Chinese journalists in the United States and in other open democracies. The journalist feels it should stay that way.

Chairman BROWN. I am not sure I do disagree with you on that, so thank you. It sort of begs the question of what role the U.S. Government plays in this. From a diplomatic perspective, it makes sense: We press China to get visas, but we also know that there needs to be a balance between our advocating for journalists when the Chinese are obviously going to spin it in a way that foreign journalists are somehow an arm of the U.S. Government. So that is an issue we need to deal with.

Mr. DIETZ. Yes.

Chairman BROWN. I am going to call on Ms. Cook, but I am going to have to leave to go preside and Larry will take over. So, thank you.

Ms. Cook, please proceed.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dietz appears in the appendix.]

**STATEMENT OF SARAH COOK, SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST  
FOR EAST ASIA, FREEDOM HOUSE**

Ms. COOK. Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

In my remarks this afternoon I am going to focus on three aspects of the Chinese Government's relationship with international media that extend beyond individual journalists who are working inside China, specifically: the use of collective punishment tactics against news organizations; the geographic expansion of some aspects of this phenomenon beyond China's borders; and the long-term impact of such pressures.

In terms of collective punishment—and we have heard a few examples of this here—the impact of the obstacles that individual journalists face goes far beyond that particular person's career or physical safety, affecting the broader ability of news organizations to report from China.

So when American television correspondent Melissa Chan's visa renewal was refused, Al Jazeera English has to shutter its presence in China because no visa was granted for a replacement.

In other cases, journalists have told the Foreign Correspondents Club of China that officials implied that their visa delay was due to their predecessor's—rather than to their own—reporting, a kind of collective retaliation.

These examples reflect the broader phenomenon whereby the targets of Chinese sanctions expand beyond specifically offending con-

tent or an individual journalist to collective retaliation against an entire outlet, sometimes with notable financial implications.

The Chinese Government's multi-faceted reactions to investigative reports by Bloomberg and the New York Times about the financial holdings of kin of high-level Chinese officials exemplify these dynamics.

The second point I wanted to raise is that the geographic reach of how these dynamics play out are not solely restricted to China. In early 2013, several news organizations, including the Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post, publicized that they had been victims of complex cyber attacks by Chinese hackers.

The attacks not only targeted individual China-based journalists who are well used to finding malware on their computers, but also infiltrated the companies' servers outside of China. Though the attacks could not be conclusively traced to the Chinese Government, several features lend credibility to that assertion.

In other cases, the connection to the Chinese Government actors is much more explicit because Chinese officials and diplomats have taken direct action to pressure international media executives outside China to take down or refrain from publishing a critical report.

After Bloomberg offered the Chinese Government an opportunity to comment on the Xi Jinping story before publication, the Chinese Ambassador to the United States met personally with the company's editor-in-chief here in Washington, DC, alongside other behind-the-scenes pressures.

These pressures are also not limited to the United States. In June 2013, the television station France 24 reported that Chinese Embassy officials visited its Paris headquarters and demanded that the chief executive remove a brief documentary about Tibet from the company's Web site. The Foreign Correspondents Club noted similar incidents occurring in London and Berlin over reporting by the Financial Times and ARD TV, respectively.

In terms of the long-term impact, hard-hitting reporting from China continues to reach newsstands and television screens around the world, thanks in no small part to the efforts of reporters like Hannah and Edward. But nonetheless, we see the Chinese Government's efforts to thwart independent investigations taking a toll on international media coverage of the country.

When journalists' sources are intimidated into silence, journalists are often forced to abandon potentially newsworthy stories, including on health issues like AIDS or deadly asbestos, or to invest an inordinate amount of time and money in order to complete them.

Lack of unimpeded access to regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet has hindered independent investigations of severe crackdowns, forced disappearances, and torture. Blocked access has sometimes forced over-reliance on Chinese state media reports, whose unverified details can sometimes seep into Western news items.

International media have often defiantly resisted direct and indirect pressure to alter their content, despite sometimes quite significant potential financial losses, but not always. Even well-respected outlets have faced allegations of self-censorship. The recent reports of apparent decisions by Bloomberg executives to curb the publica-

tion of stories investigating the links between Chinese tycoons and the political elite are one such example.

In 2012, the Washington Post's then ombudsman questioned the paper's handling of an interview with Xi Jinping that was printed verbatim based on Chinese-dictated questions and replies. He noted the Post's difficulties securing visas and the receipt of significant income from a Chinese state-run advertorial as potential pressure points.

Separately, a 2009 academic study found that reports about the Falun Gong spiritual practice in major Western news outlets and wire services were few and far between, despite the ongoing scale and severity of abuses suffered by its adherents. The author cited self-censorship and CCP [Chinese Communist Party] obstructions as two factors contributing to the phenomenon.

Despite sporadic stories, this trend has largely continued. Over the past year, dozens—and more likely hundreds—of Falun Gong adherents have been detained and sentenced to prison, in some cases for up to 12 years, yet there has been almost no coverage in major news outlets of the crackdown, despite its implications for how one might interpret other headline-grabbing developments like reform of the labor camp system.

The existence of self-censorship is difficult to conclusively document, and as I mentioned before there is a lot of very good reporting, of course, coming out of China, despite the pressures to limit reporting on certain topics.

But as the former Washington Post ombudsman noted, “There’s interdependence in the relationship and constant negotiation and compromise. The Chinese know it and they take advantage of it.”

As this kind of transnational contestation unfolds, there is much at stake. Independent news outlets facing Chinese reprisals experience rising costs and loss of advertising revenue in an already competitive and financially challenging industry.

News consumers outside of China are deprived of critical information for assessing the political stability of a major trading partner or responding to health and environmental crises. For Chinese people, the stakes are even higher. In the age of microblogs and circumvention tools, independent international reporting and media outlets offer a vital source of information on matters with life-or-death consequences.

Absent a concerted international response to Chinese Government obstructions, the situation is likely to further deteriorate as China’s international role expands alongside a deep sense of insecurity by the Chinese Communist Party at home.

In terms of actions that the U.S. Government might take in response, Freedom House, like CPJ, was quite pleased to see Vice President Biden raising this issue, both privately and publicly during his recent visit to China.

However, such statements must be backed up with real action and some form of sanctions if the Chinese Government does not heed those warnings, otherwise there will be a sense that they’ve called our bluff.

As the U.S. Government explores possible responses, I would just raise this point, that this isn’t only an issue faced by American news organizations in China, so Freedom House would really

strongly recommend taking a multi-lateral approach and consulting with like-minded governments in Europe, Australia, and Japan to formulate a united stance.

Thank you again. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this roundtable.

Mr. LIU. Thank you, Sarah, and thank you to all the great panelists, for sharing very important and timely information with us today.

I would just explain the format of our roundtables. The staff of the CECC has some questions that we would like to ask. After we are done, we'll open it up to the floor for the general public to ask questions. We have two mikes, one on this side and one on this side. When the time comes to open the floor for questions, we'll just ask you to raise your hand if you do have a question and we'll try to get to as many of you as possible. I am sure that many of you have a lot of questions to ask.

But first we'll start with some of our questions. I just kind of want to get really a free-flowing discussion going. There seems to be multiple elements to this issue, one of them being a trade issue in terms of blocking Web sites and preventing news content from news organizations like the New York Times and Bloomberg, preventing that from being accessible within China.

Do any of you have a sense of the scope of the losses in revenue and sort of what kind of impact that is having? Are you guys measuring that at all? Is there a way to quantify that or assess that?

Mr. WONG. The Times had its Web sites blocked starting in October 2012. We had opened the Chinese-language Web site with the intent of generating revenue from advertising that would be aimed at the Chinese-language market. I haven't done any independent research into this.

I know that our public editor there, Margaret Sullivan, had published a column last Sunday that said she believes the Web site had lost around 3 million, a potential of 3 million since the blocking began. But those are her numbers. I don't have any numbers directly from the company.

Ms. BEECH. TIME's Web site was blocked for several years but it was before the growth of social media, and I think the dependence that a lot of Chinese have on foreign news. I think every story that Edward and I write is somehow translated, sometimes incorrectly, into Chinese and it is disseminated on Weibo and other Chinese social media sites.

So I think there is a trade issue but there is also the impact that foreign journalists can have on the Chinese understanding their country better simply because Chinese journalists are under such onerous censorship conditions.

I think a lot of the stories that we get as Chinese journalists are those from tips from Chinese journalists who can't publish something on their own. Then they will come to us and say, "Hey, why don't you look into this?" It's a testament to their journalists' professionalism that we are able to do some of the things that we do.

So I think that, yes, there is an economic component but there is also a social and political component that I think is very important for the Chinese people themselves.

Mr. DIETZ. I won't get into the finances of it. Frankly, that's the other side of the street that I work. But in terms of impact, the foreign journalists' impact in China, I think the New York Times articles and some of the earlier Bloomberg work was really an indicator of how threatening that is to the government.

In China there's most likely scores of tens of thousands of demonstrations every year at a village or township level, and most of those are protesting some sort of abuse, corruption, or a combination of the two.

The general Chinese population is accustomed to seeing and dealing with this corruption at a local level, but when you do the sort of work that the New York Times has done, showing that Party leaders and the central government is also tinged or tainted by corruption, you begin to really threaten and undermine the power of the Party.

I don't want to make too much of this, but I think people tend to feel that their central government is somehow better than what they are seeing at the local level or at least they're putting their faith in the Party to somehow be better than that. Undercutting that faith in the central government is what will bring down the hammer on your head in China.

Hannah, Edward, you can most likely tell these stories better than I, but when you're reporting at a local level you'll very often run into a bunch of thugs or cops or local Party officials with a gang who's going to shove you around, take your film, harass you, get the local police to rough you up or something like that.

That is part of the deal of reporting in China, and you are allowed to report on that in China. You pretty much can go to a village like that and report on that sort of abuse. But what is dangerous is to take on the central government and that central authority. And when that appears in a Western paper you think it's limited to Western media. But in fact that sort of information, almost by osmosis, enters into the social media platforms that are operating through China. The social media platforms are maybe the biggest engines of change in China right now.

Ms. COOK. I would just second Bob's point in terms of, the Party's propaganda narratives. They focus very much on this idea that you can trust the center, but then put blame on the local officials. So, it is really how stories about top leaders' family undermine that particular narrative, which makes them so sensitive.

Regarding the financial implications, as I was doing the research on this report, we did actually look up the stock prices, the value for the New York Times on the day that the Web site was blocked, both the English and Chinese edition.

There was a pretty dramatic drop in the value of the stocks that day, so it seemed like some investors, at least, felt like the idea of having a Chinese-language Web site that would be able to reach Chinese audiences maybe wasn't going to be happening now.

The stocks seemed to climb back in value over the following months, but I think it can give an example of how certain investors may almost inadvertently punish a news organization financially for doing good reporting because now it seems like certain elements of their business model are not going to be working.

I think that would be the other thing I would say, and besides Western news outlets, it is even more the case for Chinese-language news outlets which attempt to be independent. The Chinese Government's obstructions make it very difficult to follow a traditional business model as in a normal setting in terms of media sustainability where you are relying on advertising. There is this whole level of unpredictability, you do not know who your audience is or will be in the future.

Actually, it is when you're becoming effective and reaching large audiences, that you are most likely to be obstructed. So you end up with these kind of, more in the Chinese language, these very strange and counter-intuitive situations where sometimes the less popular media outlets that are closer to the Chinese Government may get more advertising and revenue than some other more open media outlets or aggressive media outlets because advertisers are afraid of advertising with the latter.

So it is not just a trade issue, I think, it is also this issue of trying to tweak the economic incentives under which media entities operate. The other, I would say, is the long-term implications. So for Bloomberg—actually, the number of terminals that Bloomberg has in China isn't that many relative to other parts of the world, but clearly there's a lot of potential to grow.

So the fact that this part of their business, which is actually how they gain revenue much more so than via their Web site. They don't have Chinese-language Web sites, only an English-language Web site, and how many people really read that in China?

I think that is where the pressure can come, where you have this business plan of expansion and all of a sudden that gets cut short because of a certain kind of reporting, and that is where the Chinese Government is very good at manipulating the leverage they hold.

Mr. LIU. I wanted to go back to Edward and Hannah. Do you have a sense of maybe, in your interactions with Chinese officials, both before and after President Xi Jinping took office, any shifts and sort of what might be driving some of the actions or some of the delays that we are witnessing now? Was it the articles that could be probably one of the main sort of turning points, or are there other external factors at play?

Mr. WONG. I think that in this case—I mean, there's been a lot of analysis of the ideological character of the leadership since Xi Jinping took power and the other six members of the Standing Committee took power last November. But in our conversations and in the conversations that the Times has had with Chinese officials repeatedly since last October when the first story on the finances of the Prime Minister's family was published, they repeatedly said that writing these kinds of stories, stories about the leadership, its financial ties and its assets, will not be tolerated in China.

I know that Bloomberg News, which had done the same type of reporting, has had the same types of conversations with Chinese officials. So at least in the way they've expressed it to us, it's very article-focused, it's focused on this type of reporting.

But as you know, these types of articles are a very narrow strand of reporting that we can just put aside or that anyone would want

to put aside. Like, these articles get to the heart of the nexus between the Party and the economy, and I think Bob, in his explanation, characterized their impact very succinctly. In the conversations we've had they've definitely pinned the obstacles that we're facing on the fact that we publish these articles.

Ms. BEECH. Just to add to that, I think that the two previous cases, one of Melissa Chan of Al Jazeera and Paul Mooney of Reuters, are of a slightly different ilk because clearly, although we have never been given an explanation as to why they didn't get their visas, but we presume it is because of relatively hard-hitting human rights reporting and not about reporting about high-level officials, which is the types of things that the New York Times and Bloomberg have been focusing on, as Edward said.

I think the other issue is a solution-based issue, which is, from the foreign community's perspective, what carrots and sticks do we have to be able to convince the Chinese Government that they should accord the kinds of rights to both Chinese citizens, and to a lesser extent to foreign journalists, that the Constitution of China presents to them as being part of their life in China.

You look at—China is the second-largest economy in the world. It has acceded to the WTO. It successfully hosted the Beijing Olympics. There are a lot of things, a lot of situations in which there could have been pressure that could be borne on the Chinese Government, and those types of issues in which there can be some sort of negotiation to try to better the human rights situation are fewer and fewer. So, I don't know what the answer is. There's obviously this issue of reciprocity, which has foes and adherents as well.

But I think it is increasingly difficult to think of a way in which the foreign community can convince the Chinese Government that the way that they're treating both foreign journalists and Chinese media, and with this crackdown on dissidents, scholars, and other people who speak out is not necessarily the best thing for the country.

Mr. DIETZ. Just to develop that a little bit, I think what we're seeing now in China is a crackdown, a change in philosophy, governmental philosophy, and a hardening of the attitude toward media in China. But over the years, these things have always been cyclical. There have always been more open periods, closed periods, open periods, and you can really see them come and go over the years.

Before the Xi government came into place, if you were to speak to Chinese journalists—we must not have a simplified image of Chinese journalists who are a bunch of Party hacks, repressed Party hacks who dare not stray out of the Party line. If you were to have spoken to many Chinese journalists prior to the arrival of the Xi government, you would have found that they felt they were in something they were calling a Golden Age. While there were plenty of restrictions and plenty of guidelines and a steady stream of directives from the Central Propaganda Department they felt that, more than any time in the past, they could go out and pursue stories, stay ahead of the curve of the propaganda directives coming down, and play a role in Chinese society that they had not been able to play in the decades before.

There were earlier periods, too, in which that happened as well. But I think what we're seeing now is something going downhill. I don't know if we've hit the bottom and I am afraid how far downhill it will go. But it doesn't mean right now that this is the end of freedom of journalism, freedom of speech or journalism in China.

I think what this is at this point is a new government asserting its authority, trying to gain control of an increasingly, for them, unruly media world, driven by domestic media, driven by foreign media, but even more so driven by social media, which just keeps bubbling up from the bottom. It is the source of information for Chinese journalists who are covering stories who say, "We didn't know this was happening, let's cover it."

Is it going to be like this all the time in China? In the past we have seen that these restrictive periods do not always last. Right now there does really appear to be a crackdown and a real intent to suppress not just dissent, but even discussion to some extent in China.

Mr. LIU. Thank you.

I will turn it over to our Deputy Staff Director, who works for Congressman Chris Smith, Paul Protic. I think he has a question he would like to ask you.

Mr. PROTIC. Thank you, Mr. Liu, and thank you to our distinguished panelists.

Can you further describe your dealings with Chinese officials? Have they told you not to cover certain stories specifically?

Mr. WONG. At the Times, we have met with Chinese officials at various levels. Our publisher, Arthur Salzberger, has met with them. Reporters in the bureau have met with them in different meetings and they have admonished us at varying times for different kinds of stories. In the current round of difficulties we're facing, as I said, they've talked and they've focused on stories about the leadership and finances of the leadership's families.

In the past, they have lectured us on other types of coverage, for example, coverage of Tibet issues, coverage of protests, certain types of protests in China such as during the Jasmine Revolution period where there was no real Jasmine Revolution, but there were calls for protests on the Internet and the Western news media covered it widely. Many Western reporters, including ones from our bureau, were called in to be lectured by various Chinese officials.

So in the last year, the lecture has been focused on these stories focused on personal finances. I have seen reports recently, including by Evan Osnos of the New Yorker, that diplomats for China have told other reporters like Evan that they believe the Times and Bloomberg are out to overthrow the Party.

They have also said, for example, that the Times is trying to act like the Central Discipline Inspection Committee of China, which is sort of the Party's internal corruption investigation agency. So obviously even in those conversations they're focused on the stories that we're doing about the leadership, and those are conversations they're having with other reporters, not with us.

Ms. BEECH. I think one of the basic misconceptions that exists between the Foreign Ministry officials that I've met with is that there is still, as one of you mentioned, an assumption that we somehow work for the Chinese Government and that we reflect

some sort of directive from Washington, which as most of you know is definitely not the case.

So that informs the discussion, so you spend the first part of the discussion saying, "Well, actually, we don't work for the U.S. Government, we work for media organizations that are independent." There are certain no-go issues. In the conversations that I've had and the lectures that I've been brought in to listen to at the Foreign Ministry, things like Edward said, Tibet, Xinjiang, these autonomous regions that are considered ethnically sensitive and ones that are very complicated. I've done very little on the wealth accrued by major Communist Party families, so that's his bailiwick.

But I will say that there are, as I said, no-go areas where you just do not go, anything Tibet. I've gotten called in probably three or four times to talk about Tibetan issues. I have one slight disagreement in terms of the central and local government dichotomy.

When I was based in Shanghai it was during SARS. For some magical reason, a lot of places around Shanghai had suspected, or even confirmed, SARS cases and Shanghai kept on saying that there weren't any. There were suspected cases but there were not actually cases. I did some reporting and actually found some cases of SARS in Shanghai.

The local government, much more than the central government, was very upset because this made Shanghai, the commercial center of China, look very bad. I was actually sued for libel in a court, I believe in Washington State, and this court case went on and on and I actually was not very involved in the resolution of it.

But in addition, I got called in to the Foreign Ministry in Shanghai many times. The Shanghai Foreign Ministry officials found out that I had not gone to journalism school and they thought that it would be correct for them to bring in a Chinese journalism professor to lecture me on journalistic ethics.

So I sat there for many hours and we went through, this is the inverted pyramid and this is what you're supposed to do as a foreign journalist. You just nod and take it because you want to be able to cover China, and I wasn't getting beaten up, I wasn't going through the kinds of things that foreign journalists in Russia go through, which is to get assassinated. So, it seemed a small price to pay to learn about journalism from a Chinese professor.

Ms. COOK. I would just second, I think, the point that Hannah raised earlier about the cases of Paul, and also Melissa Chan, where it did seem as much about the journalists themselves, or in Melissa Chan's case it wasn't clear if it was even about a report that her colleagues in the United States had done about labor camps.

But I think with Paul, it sounded like, from what I heard from him in terms of some of his conversations with Chinese officials, that there were in some cases specific stories that they presented to him and hoped that he would be more objective in the future.

But I think it is one of those issues where you just have somebody who really understands China, has contacts in the activist community and has proven that he is able to dig up certain stories that might not otherwise see the light of day.

I think that they are quite worried about somebody like that, especially in the age of microblogs, like Bob had mentioned, where

so much of this information is able to circle back into China, which is different from, say, 10 years ago.

Mr. LIU. Thank you. Jesse Heatley of our staff, I think, has a question for you guys.

Mr. HEATLEY. Sure. I'd like to thank the panelists today. I have a quick question. Bob had mentioned that the lapse of visas or the failure to renew visas might go through, but it might not. If the visas are not renewed, what does that mean for the New York Times and Bloomberg? Can the New York Times or Bloomberg cover China from outside China? How will the coverage change, and what are the prospects?

Mr. WONG. I don't think we would have a choice other than to keep covering China from outside. I mean, Chris Buckley is one example. His visa for Reuters expired and the government did not grant him one for the Times last year, so then he's been writing about China, and especially about Chinese politics, from Hong Kong for us. We all think that obviously his reports would be more robust if he were in Beijing. He's done a very good job from Hong Kong because he's such an experienced China watcher, and such an experienced journalist reporting on these issues.

But I think that we would have less access to sources, we would have less sense of what's going on on the ground. Our stories would lack sort of the voices of ordinary Chinese, as well as people from the elite classes. I think that we would lose a sense of the nuances of what's going on in China, the entire spectrum of issues.

I'm not just talking about the sort of stories that would be investigative or hard-hitting in nature, but also the sort of stories about lifestyle or about culture. These stories are just as important to our coverage of China, I think. The public, I think, would get a more monochromatic view of China if we were writing about China from outside.

Ms. BEECH. I can't obviously speak on the New York Times case. A friend of ours who is an American journalist based in China was joking that we should all open news bureaus in Taipei and see how that works as a listening post. I think Hong Kong has gone back to being a listening post for China, which is on the one hand—there are a lot of interesting people who come through Hong Kong, but that is, again as Edward said, not an ideal situation.

I think part of the issue is that it is very difficult as foreign journalists in China to talk to Chinese officials. You rarely get called in unless you've done something wrong and you get a lecture. The irony is that personal relationships matter in any society and they matter a lot in China, and I think humanizing Chinese officials, getting to know them, getting to know what makes them tick, how they started with the hard-scrabble lifestyle and they've risen to great heights, I mean, that kind of access would make them into humanized people that we could really write about in a much more well-balanced way.

This kind of faceless Chinese leadership, the fact that Edward, I, and others are spending all this time trying to find out the tiniest details to illuminate who these people are, that is not helpful for trying to create a well-rounded, sophisticated understanding of China. I would say that if there's any lesson that the Foreign

Ministry might want to take from this experience is that honey works.

Mr. LIU. Thank you.

Do we have any more questions? Okay. I think we'll open it to the floor now for those who have questions. Please limit yourself to one question. This is on the record, so if you don't want to identify yourself you do not have to. Again, please just limit yourself to one question and raise your hand if you have a question and we'll bring a mike over to you.

Okay. Sure. The gentleman over here in the front.

Mr. NELSON. My name is Mark Nelson. I'm from the Center for International Media Assistance [CIMA] here in DC. I'm just wondering to what extent this issue is being covered in the Chinese media and how much awareness there is of this in China, and to what extent it's a reflection of the state of media development in China itself. Would a stronger and more open media, Chinese media, help resolve issues like this in the country?

Mr. LIU. Does anyone want to take that?

Mr. WONG. I haven't seen much coverage of this in the Chinese media. There's been a lot of coverage in the last week, for example, of this issue following Vice President Biden's trip to China, but I haven't seen this issue brought up in any of the Chinese coverage of that trip. So I think that it's not an issue that they talk about a lot.

I saw today or yesterday that on Asia Society's ChinaFile Web site there was a senior reporter/editor for China Daily U.S. who spoke out about this issue, and his viewpoint was that he was saying that the United States should not engage in visa reciprocity because two wrongs don't make a right, which is interesting because it implies that he believes that this visa delay or denial is a wrong.

So I am hoping that he'll communicate his viewpoints and also the conversations that are going on in Washington to his superiors in Beijing, but other than that I haven't seen any Chinese journalists write about this or speak out about this.

Mr. LIU. Okay. Yes, go ahead.

Ms. COOK. I think in some of the Hong Kong papers you've seen discussion. I think Chang Ping maybe wrote about it. He is a Chinese journalist who is now in Germany, probably because he had trouble getting a visa to work in Hong Kong, actually.

I think he wrote it in Chinese and then it was translated into English, but I haven't seen much in the Chinese-language media. I would just acknowledge that the report that much of my testimony had come from was written for CIMA, so they have a lot to do with the knowledge that I was able to share with all of you today.

Mr. LIU. Great. Thank you. Hi. Yes, over here.

Ms. LIU. My name is Diamond Liu. There is a famous saying that, "Democracy is only one generation from being wiped out." Democracy is more fragile than we take it to be. What is happening to you now, I can say with some historical perspective, is what was happening in China in the 1940s. They were unable to stand up and they lost everything.

Now, there is one thing I think that democratic leaders do not understand. For a place to remain democratic, they need a free

press, a vigorous free press. I thank the committee for organizing this hearing. But I do fault our democratic leader for not standing up strongly enough, defending free journalism. And I agree with Sarah completely that we need a multilateral response, a moldable response, not just one response. It has to be vigorous.

Now, I would like to ask a question now. On December 8, the human rights date, there was a mass suicide on Tiananmen Square which was reported in the social media in China. I do not know if any of you are aware of that incident. I was not able to find any other coverage.

From what I could gather, these petitioners who are not sophisticated have no connection to foreign media. When I sent a photograph of the people slumped on the ground on Tiananmen to some friends in Beijing, some journalist friends, they received my email with no content. So they are very efficient in censoring even email. I wonder if any of you have heard of this or have seen any coverage of this. Thank you.

Ms. BEECH. I must admit that I was on the airplane and coming to the United States on December 8, so I am probably not the right person to talk to. But I would say that it is a truth among journalists that we talk to cabbies and get their view of what's going on in the country, but I would be hard pressed to find a Beijing taxi driver who does not know about the New York Times series on the financial allegations that the Times has made against top leaders or their families within China.

So I think a lot more information does trickle down despite the fact that Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, is constantly blocked and shepherded by state censors. There's still enough out there and there's an appetite among the Chinese for this information that I think is helping to drive the foreign press and Chinese press.

One of the things that happens with the Chinese press is oftentimes—let's say you're based in southern China and you can't write about something that's happening in southern China, but you can send a tip to your friend in northern China who isn't bound by the same local officials and say, "Hey, why don't you write a story about what's going on?"

So there are ways around it and information travels much more freely than it used to. I think we've reached the point, whether you want to call it the middle-income trap or this idea where political reform—I think among even people who have made a lot of money in China, that they want political reform, at least legal reform, to be able to protect the money that they have made.

I think that that impulse will cause them to push for more freedom of information. Does that mean that they want foreign journalists to be running around the country? Maybe no, but it does mean that access to information, whether it's business news, even human rights news, matters, is seen as mattering more to their future livelihoods because they've reached a level of economic success and you want the next step, which is more information.

Mr. WONG. I would say, just to add to that and to make a point that sort of underscores the various ways in which the foreign media seems important within China, not just by readers outside of China, is that Hannah talked about, for example, an example

where a Chinese journalist who can't report on a subject might give a tip to a foreign journalist. But there are also examples of, once a foreign organization reports a lot on certain topics, then that opens up the path for conversation for that topic within the Chinese media.

So one example we noticed was that of air pollution, that this is something that the foreign media had been reporting on for the last couple of years. It's a fairly obvious issue for anyone living in China. The U.S. Embassy also has been trying to widen public discourse about this because they were concerned that probably their own employees were suffering the effects of the air.

But in any case, the foreign media had been reporting on it, and then because of a particularly bad bout of air pollution last January, then due to the widespread coverage in foreign media and to other pressures coming from within China, the state media started writing front-page stories about this issue.

I think that there's a dialectic going on between the foreign media and the state media, and it's not black and white. We're not seen as enemies and oftentimes Chinese journalists want to be able to have cover for writing their own stories about topics and we help provide part of that conversation piece.

I think that's important and I think for ordinary Chinese and also for Chinese officials, there are many officials in various agencies that want to see these reports being put out there by the foreign media and by the state media. I think they're grateful that the Times is there, that TIME Magazine is there and that others are there, and we are hopeful that they can engage in a dialogue with whatever officials are in charge of the visa process.

Mr. DIETZ. Just to develop that thought a little bit more, I think what we're seeing in China is that the media crackdown is not working, frankly, that this is a government racing to try to stay at the head of the parade and in doing so tripping and stumbling a lot.

This air pollution issue, which was really the most obvious thing to everyone who had been in China, has been around for a terribly long time but now is just current and currently discussed in media.

I say the crackdown is not working, but what I'm worried about is that because of this drive of social media that the government is going to crack down harder, it's going to try more and more to stay at the head of this very fast-moving digitally powered parade.

You're seeing an increasing demand from consumers, not just wealthy business people who want to protect their billions but just normal middle class—and there's a tremendously emerging, rapidly emerging middle class in China—media consumers who are expecting better and better media coverage of the world in which they live, and they're really demanding it. Chinese media, when they can, try and meet that demand.

Even when journalists have run afoul of the government, it's gotten to a point now where people are not being thrown off in jail or sent off. Offenders might be demoted, but there's a series of warnings and levels of warnings that editors "get." Editors are savvy enough to know how far they can go on stories, but they also know that they're getting a demand for better reporting from the readership. And there's also a commercial demand.

Other than several flagship newspapers and CCTV, most media in China operate pretty much the way Western media do, having to rely on sources of income through advertising or readership. The government is looking at this and they are caught in a terrible quandary of, how are we going to control this, meet the demand, modernize this nation, satisfy an emerging middle class?

So much of the middle class now travels outside of China, they go to Europe, the United States. They travel around and they see what the rest of the world is doing and they want more of that. It is that demand, the social media, which are just—I've said it so many times already today, but it's just driving from underneath the expectations of the Chinese people, that the government, I'm afraid, is going to mistakenly try and crack down harder.

We've said that this is very much an open situation with these 24 or so visas, and who knows which way it will go. I have a secret fear in the back of my head, and I've been told to make no predictions here, but there's a great concern that there will be this ham-fisted response from the government of saying we're going to show these people once and for all they can't do this in our country and really come down much more heavily than necessary or is appropriate on these news organizations, hoping to intimidate the rest of the foreign media in China.

Hannah's article, "Foreign Correspondents in China Do Not Censor Themselves To Get Visas" is a must read. It is your lead article on your blog, right Hannah? Foreign journalists don't. But foreign journalists will tell you that they are under pressure. They're aware of this visa pressure, but I'm just not aware of anyone who's trimmed back coverage—and of course I know the accusations being made against Bloomberg.

I think that I'm worried that this government is going to get harder and stupider before it gets smarter and realizes it's not going to be able to win this battle, not just against foreign media but against Chinese media as well.

Ms. COOK. Looking back on the events of the last few months, especially in terms of social media, I think the landscape has actually become much more pessimistic than it was. We've really seen a crackdown.

To go back to the air pollution example, some of the "Big V" users who were very instrumental in promoting discussion specifically related to PM<sub>2.5</sub> have been among those on the receiving end of the social media crackdown that has been unfolding since the spring.

What's been interesting, in this case, is that in many ways it's been a much more sophisticated form of crackdown than previous ones. The authorities have used various approaches, including setting examples with televised confessions and issuing judicial guidelines that would impose very high prison sentences for people who write something that gets re-Tweeted 500 times or clicked on 5,000 times.

We don't know of any cases where anybody has actually been sentenced to prison on such charges, but from the conversations we've had with people, including people who follow Chinese social media more closely than I do, it's really had a chilling effect.

There is a kind of social engineering sophistication to how the authorities are approaching the crackdown to encourage people to self censor so that they do not actually have to come down so hard from a technical or prosecutorial standpoint. With this visa issue you also see these kinds of murky incentives—carrots and sticks that are used to try to encourage self-censorship. I think the challenge often is not so much the level of the journalist, but manifests in some cases as debates happening internally at higher levels of media organizations. And these are very tough decisions.

I mean, it's easy to look from the outside. These are very tough decisions for media organizations, especially in the current financial situation many media face. There is the sales department, the editorial team, and you have clashes among these different actors, with senior executives having to make very tough decisions about coverage in some cases.

The Chinese Government is very good at pressing these buttons to make decisions, that in many other media environments would be no-brainers, much more of an issue and kind of raising the bar to whether certain newsworthy stories are covered or not. So I would say that with regard to foreign media, we are also seeing a higher level of sophistication in the ways in which the authorities are trying to manage and get a grip on a news environment that they're having much more difficulty controlling.

Unfortunately, from a number of the people that I've spoken to, there is a sense that some of the stories—whether it was the air pollution, the labor camps, or other issues that came up last year and really pushed real changes on the part of the government—that you wouldn't be able to see those dynamics happening now after the chilling effect that has happened in social media. But, hopefully we will be pleasantly surprised in the coming months and will see more of these kinds of stories popping up again.

Mr. LIU. Okay. Let's try to get a few more questions in. Yes, the gentleman in the back there.

Mr. FAY. Hi, my name is Greg Fay. I'm with the Uyghur Human Rights Project. Hannah, you mentioned a few times that you've been called in by officials to talk about your reporting on Tibet, and I'm just curious how that has affected your reporting on Tibet and how you think that official pressure has affected reporting about Uyghur issues as well.

Last year the Committee to Protect Journalists published a statistic that over half of all journalists detained in China were Tibetans or Uyghurs, so I'm also wondering, how do you deal with the safety of your colleagues and also of your Tibetan and Uyghur sources? Thank you.

Ms. BEECH. This is from a personal perspective. I'm relatively pig-headed. If somebody tells me not to do something, I have a compulsion to want to do it. So I don't feel like it has made me moderate my coverage of ethnic issues, particularly with Tibet and Xinjiang.

I think you bring up a very good point in terms of Chinese sources and Chinese assistance, because the worst thing that will happen to somebody like Edward and me is that we get kicked out of China, which is a shame because we spent all this time committed to trying to understand the place. Our Chinese sources, our

Chinese fixers, our Chinese staff are under much more greater pressure and they are the ones who get sent to jail, who get beaten up, who get intimidated on a regular basis.

So the balance that I think that we have to strike is not so much—for me as a journalist who doesn't have to worry as much about the business side of my company is to ensure the safety of those people. So whether that means using different names for people, obscuring some of the details, making sure that you go places in a way where you don't attract attention, those are all things that you really have to plan much more than you would if you were going to an area that was more Han-dominated.

But I think Xinjiang and Tibet, and to a lesser extent the Inner Mongolia issue, those are really tough issues. I think in the coming months and years, especially after there is new leadership within ethnic communities, that this is going to become an even greater issue that we will have to cover.

Ms. COOK. I think with the Uyghur issue, I don't remember if it was Edward who wrote this story or not for the Times, but this example highlights some of the reasons why the Chinese Government is so afraid of allowing foreign journalists into Xinjiang.

Back in 2008, there was some form of a clash supposedly between Uyghur assailants and Chinese military. The Chinese media and the press were kind of playing this up as an attack, an example of militant Islamic separatism or something.

Then a few months later, or a year later, there was an article, I think, in the Times about there had been some Western tourists there who had actually seen the incident happen. They were saying it was all very strange because it was actually uniformed policemen or military men using machetes against other uniformed military men. It is, I think, a really important article to highlight. It happened to be that you had these other witnesses who were there that could lend real weight to questions about the credibility of an assertion and a spin that the Chinese state media had put on the event. That spin had reinforced official narratives that are then used to suppress Uyghurs and gain cooperation from other governments that there are these supposed Uyghur terrorists.

I think that just highlights the importance of when journalists are able to get into Tibet or into Xinjiang, the kind of eyewitnesses they can be, the way they can be the eyes and ears on the ground for the world and can question these state-run narratives. This is really important. I think that is also why the Chinese Government is so restrictive about whether they allow them in or not.

Mr. STEIN. Thank you. Todd Stein with the International Campaign for Tibet. To follow up on that question, Ms. Beech, you mentioned the no-go on those issues. To what extent—on the writing on those issues. To what extent are those no-go areas? What is your freedom to travel within the country, what restrictions do you face? That 2008 Olympic promise on journalist access throughout the country, to what extent is that honored or is it just ditched?

Has there been any change in levels of freedom to travel in recent months as this issue we're talking about has sort of accelerated?

Ms. BEECH. I think one of the issues with rules and regulations in China is that they are not always enforced, and they are enforced

subjectively and they grow in certain ways. So when there was a supposed Jasmine Revolution following the Arab Spring in China, which really turned out to be nothing, we were essentially told as foreign correspondents in Beijing that we could not visit an area which is one of the main shopping districts in Beijing.

So we were allowed to report anywhere in China except for this place. I mean, the rules shift. In terms of going into Tibetan regions in Western Sichuan, Qinghai, and obviously the Tibet Autonomous Region, there are often roadblocks. Even if you get through the roadblocks, you don't sort of want to go into the tradecraft, but there are ways in which you try to evade the roadblocks. Several journalists have been able to get in and they have been able to—even though oftentimes the roads are lined with security forces.

It is not an ideal reporting condition, so you get in there really quickly and then you get out of there really quickly. So does this provide nuanced, objective reporting? No, but it's sort of the best that we can do. At least in the case of the Tibetan community, and to a lesser extent with the Uyghur community, there are a lot of people in Dharamsala and within the exiled Tibetan community who try to disseminate information.

Now, obviously you have to take that with a grain of salt because they are advocates and they are trying to advocate a certain perspective on the situation in Tibet, so you're constantly trying to balance, is this an extremist activist, is this a normal counter-narrative to Beijing's side of things? It's a lot of factors that you're having to put together into a story that you hope is as objective as possible, but it's tough.

Mr. LIU. Okay. One more question.

PARTICIPANT. I have one question for the panel. Before that, I have some thoughts to share. If we know in terms of a military power the United States is much stronger than China, but if we don't take this media issue seriously I'm afraid that we're already losing to China before a war is waged because the Chinese regime knows how important this media is. The information that people get determines how they think. How they think determines how they act.

Now, if we look at the four entities here, the Chinese regime, Chinese people, the American Government, and Americans and see what they do to each other, the Chinese regime controls all the media, domestic media, so that the Chinese people do not get accurate information. Also, they block the free reporting by the foreign journalists so that American people do not get accurate information.

At the same time, they have all the media in this country, propaganda media, China Daily, in their news racks throughout Washington, DC, and also their TV channels are on cable in all the metro areas. So my question is, what would the panelists suggest the U.S. Government do to change this imbalance?

Mr. WONG. The New York Times does not have a position on any policies under consideration, and I personally don't have any position to offer myself, either.

Ms. BEECH. I would second that. I'm not a politician. I'm not in the U.S. Government. I don't really have an ability to be able to recommend a particular policy. I mean, I would say that despite

the fact that there is blocking on either side, that information does get out. It does get out through Weibo, it does get out through Weixin, and that taxi driver example that I mentioned before shows that even people who might not have much invested in these issues know what's going on, and even though there is constant censorship of key search words on Weibo, that there is an interplay of information.

Now, the question with Weibo, and it's a good one, is like any Internet, online forum, does it represent two extreme views? If you've got sort of a crazy from the right and a crazy from the left, how do you collate those and get a more objective perspective on what the Chinese people are thinking for 1.3 billion people. Of course, it's impossible. I think, as foreign journalists, we sometimes over-emphasize that as a barometer of how we measure Chinese opinion, and that is partly because there are not that many other avenues to do so.

Mr. DIETZ. I'm not at all convinced that China is winning the propaganda war. I don't think it's winning the war at home. I think, as I've said several times before today, I think it's rushing to stay ahead of the demand for information from an increasingly savvy public.

One thing I noticed China doing in countries other than Western countries is expanding its soft power and really replicating what the United States has been doing for many years of using international radio broadcasts, television stations, influencing African media or media in other developing regions.

We see Chinese influence in Hong Kong where the media is becoming increasingly centralized and very discreetly but very obviously beholden to political power in Beijing, and frankly we see the same thing happening more on a commercial basis in Taiwan. But I don't see right now China winning a propaganda war, U.S. versus China. I'm not convinced that that's working at all.

I think even if Bloomberg, AP, New York Times, and the Washington Post were kicked out of Beijing, that that would mean China would win a war like that. Actually, I should really pull that back right away. I don't think it's a war, I think it's a conflict. I'm not moderating that in some way to diminish it, but it's not a battle going on, it's something much more subtle. I just don't think that China is winning that. I don't think they're winning it at home and I don't think they're really winning it in the developed countries.

What I do look at is in developing countries where I think they're more subtle and have a greater control over media which might be less experienced or sophisticated.

Mr. LIU. Okay. Thank you.

I wanted to give the panel—oh. Sorry, go ahead.

Ms. COOK. Is it okay if I respond to that question real quick?

Mr. LIU. Yes. Sure.

Ms. COOK. I guess I would just say that I think on this question of the reciprocity of whether we don't provide visas to, say, Chinese state-run media who come to the United States, I think that's wrapped up with lots of different challenges, including the fact that those journalists aren't the ones making these decisions.

I would be more in favor of having any kind of reciprocation be targeted at officials, Chinese officials. Say, perhaps it could be dip-

lomatic credentials that may be delayed, a visa for someone from the Foreign Ministry who is coming here, something along those lines.

I don't know how often people from the Public Security Bureau try to get U.S. visas, but there would be lots of reasons to deny a visa to someone from the Public Security Bureau based on some of the criteria and possibly human rights abuses they may have been involved with, even absent of the issue of the foreign journalists.

So I think that's where there would be ways to maybe think about how to apply pressure to the people who are making these decisions, or at least close to the people making these decisions. The other thing is I tend to agree with Bob. Chinese-language media is a very different landscape compared to English-language media.

With English-language media, there is kind of a long way to go for the Chinese Government's influence to really infiltrate. I think it really behooves Americans to understand what China Daily is. They are very subtle in saying this is a leading English-language newspaper in China, and most Americans don't really know what that means.

So I don't think it's necessarily the role of the U.S. Government, I think it's maybe the role of organizations like Freedom House, CPJ, or others, or journalists who are writing about these stories to inform the U.S. public about what that means and who owns China Daily, because that is probably the best protection for Americans to at least be more aware and open-eyed when they're reading the articles in these state-run Chinese media outlets.

Mr. LIU. Okay. Well, thank you so much for coming. I want to give you guys an opportunity, if you have any last comments, otherwise we can wrap it up.

Did you have any?

Ms. BEECH. Just to quickly follow up with an anecdote from Shanghai.

Mr. LIU. Sure.

Ms. BEECH. Back when SARS was—we didn't quite know what SARS was. I went through lectures from the Foreign Ministry, and then they brought in the state security guy and that is sort of a step up and it's scarier.

I said, "So where are we going to meet?" He wanted to meet at the Starbucks, the Xi Tian Di, in Shanghai, which seems sort of an unusual place to meet the state security man. Anyway, he gave me a very pro forma lecture on journalism and how what I was doing was not helpful for U.S.-China relations, and I should tell my bosses in New York. I said, "Well, actually my boss is in Washington, not New York."

But anyway, we went on and on about this. But he was a pleasant guy, and afterward he said, "Can I ask you a question?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I have a daughter in school in Shanghai, and do you think that I should take her out because of SARS?" This is in 2003.

It occurred to me that we're not talking about a faceless bureaucracy of people within the Chinese Government. There are lots of people in the Chinese Government who want the country to become

better and who are committed to it, and they are worried about their families and they are worried about a lack of information.

So for me, more than any interaction with a Chinese official, this sort of showed me that there is concern, there is hope for change. Whether it's on an individual level and whether that will actually proliferate and mean actual political reform to connect to the economic reform we have seen, I don't know, but it was a little ray of hope.

Mr. DIETZ. I had no final comments prepared, but this is just another SARS anecdote. While Hannah was in Shanghai I was working for the World Health Organization [WHO] in Beijing doing risk communications and media relations during the SARS outbreak. For WHO, it was a completely new world of trying to deal with the world demand for information like that.

I wound up working with a tremendous number of Chinese journalists and I was just stunned by their competence, by what they knew and what they couldn't report, and their sense of responsibility. Even if they couldn't get things into a paper or on air, they would come and they would sit down and give us debriefs of their trips to the countryside, the knowledge they had of the situation, and one of the ways in which the World Health Organization stayed on top of the situation, to the extent that we were able to, was through close contacts with Chinese journalists who were willing to share information which they couldn't use in their reporting. It formed my opinion of Chinese journalists, which is just at this point indelible. I just think you just have to accept that these are wonderfully competent, hard-working people.

Yes, there are Party hacks and there are people who are just going in to collect their paychecks. But, just like you see journalists like these here who are working and engaged intellectually and are enthusiastic about what they're doing, there's a vast number of Chinese journalists who were doing the same thing, playing within a narrower field of rules, but working with the same integrity that other journalists outside China do.

Mr. LIU. Okay. Well, we're just a few minutes over so we'll wrap up here. I just want to say one final word to thank each of you for taking time out of your busy schedule to come here and share your very important perspectives and helping us to understand these issues better; obviously it's been in the headlines for the last week or so. To get your perspectives and to get your experiences to help contextualize what's going on, what the situation is, has been extremely helpful. I know that hopefully things will improve over there.

But with that, thank you all for coming. This roundtable is adjourned.

[Applause].

[Whereupon, at 5:08 p.m. the roundtable was concluded.]

## **A P P E N D I X**

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK TIMES SUBMITTED BY EDWARD WONG

DECEMBER 11, 2013

In the last year, The New York Times and other major foreign news organizations have been confronted with deteriorating conditions for doing journalism in China. The Communist Party and Chinese government have stepped up their efforts to shape news coverage and suppress stories they find objectionable, applying pressure in various forms and in arguably unprecedented fashion. The situation is the most serious in years and poses an urgent threat to our ability to report freely and comprehensively on the world's second largest economy.

Most recently, Chinese officials have halted the regular year-end renewal process for the residency visas of nine Times journalists. If the renewal process does not go forward, these journalists and their families will be forced to leave China before the end of the year. With the first visas expiring in less than two weeks, the Times could be left without reporters in mainland China for the first time in nearly three decades.

The Chinese government has also refused for many months to provide visas for two journalists hired for the Beijing bureau by the Times. Philip Pan, the incoming bureau chief, has been waiting more than a year and a half. Chris Buckley, who was hired from Reuters in the fall of 2012, had to leave Beijing a year ago when his visa from his previous employer expired and the government declined to provide a new one for the Times. He has been forced to live in Hong Kong, apart from his wife and daughter, who reside in Beijing.

In addition, China has blocked access to the websites of the Times, including a new Chinese-language site, since the October 2012 publication of a report on the hidden wealth of family members of the prime minister at the time. This severely hampers our ability to provide quality journalism to readers in Chinese. This fall, we started an online Chinese-language version of T Magazine, the Times' culture and lifestyle publication, only to have that blocked in November after publication of other stories the authorities deemed unacceptable.

In conversations in the last year with the Times, Chinese officials have pointedly objected to articles that explore the intersection between elite politics and the economy. In other words, they are asking that the Times and other news organizations refrain from the kind of reporting that we do in every part of the world, including the United States. As China's economy becomes more deeply intertwined with that of the United States and other nations, covering the full range of issues in the country becomes increasingly important.

Senior executives at the Times have tried to explain our mission and our viewpoint to Chinese officials. The Times increased those efforts last year when our websites were blocked and our visa applications for new journalists frozen. Despite our attempts at dialogue and at resolving misunderstandings, Chinese officials continue to treat coverage in the Times as hostile. So we find ourselves at an unusually uncertain moment, one that involves our core principles of open journalistic inquiry and also our ability to reach the large and news-hungry online audience in China.

The Times remains committed to coverage of China. We have invested great resources in this, and we have demonstrated a willingness to report on all aspects of China—its politics, economy, foreign policy, environment, culture, sports, even fashion. We will continue to report on China even if our journalists are expelled from the country, though the range and depth of our coverage will suffer—as would our readers' understanding of China. We also worry that expulsions would have a profound chilling effect across news media organizations.

As always, we are willing to work with all parties to ensure that we can remain engaged with China while performing our journalistic mission. That has been the goal of the Times in China since the country's leaders embraced a policy of reform and opening up decades ago.

Jill Abramson, Executive Editor  
The New York Times

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT DIETZ

DECEMBER 11, 2013

With the arrival of Chinese President Xi Jinping's government in November 2012, foreign journalists based in China say there has been an unmistakable hardening of attempts to control their activities through the denial of visas or delays in their approval. In its year-end statement, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) said about the problems with visas, "The authorities have given no public explanation for their actions, leading to the impression that they have been taken in reprisal for reporting that displeased the government. Chinese officials have said that foreign media in China must abide by Chinese laws and regulations, but they have never explained which laws and regulations" are at issue to reporters who have been denied visas. The FCCC mentioned *The New York Times* bureau chief, Philip Pan, who has been waiting for over 18 months, and the *Times*' correspondent Chris Buckley, who has been in Hong Kong awaiting a visa for a year. Also mentioned by the FCCC are Paul Mooney, who is here with us today because he was denied a visa to work as a features writer for Reuters after 18 years of reporting from China, and Melissa Chan, Al Jazeera's English-language service correspondent, who was denied a visa in May 2012 and effectively expelled. (Annex 1, below, contains the FCCC's entire statement, with a list of five detailed complaints, including confrontations with police, restricted travel to areas of unrest, harassment of locally hired staff in China, and diplomatic pressure in journalists' home countries about their reporting.)

Unease around visa renewals has long been a problem in China. In the past, journalists applied for their visas in November and December and generally got them in December. A journalist's visa expires a year after the day it is issued. If, say, they are issued a visa on December 15, their visa will expire the following year on December 14. Larger organizations with many employees submit visas on different dates, each with a different expiration date. Under new rules announced in June and July, all visas, not just those for journalists, must go through a screening by the Public Security Bureau that could take up to 15 business days—though at the time of the announcement authorities said they would try to expedite as many cases as possible. There also seems to be a problem with the software developed to handle the workload. On Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said at a regular briefing that China's treatment of foreign journalists consistently follows laws and regulations.

Journalists in China agree that the two media organizations attracting the most attention about visa renewals, *The New York Times* and Bloomberg News, do seem to be under direct threat of retaliation, apparently because of their critical reporting on sensitive issues in China. Together, about 23 or 24 staff are affected. Neither the *Times* nor Bloomberg responded to CPJ's requests for more information. (Both Bloomberg and *The New York Times* have longstanding close ties to CPJ.) It is also worth noting that none of the journalists with whom CPJ spoke in recent days were willing to be fully identified. Some requested that they only be contacted by phone so there would be no email trail to link them to this presentation.

As one journalist who worries their visa will not be renewed told me, "The big question right now is—are the Chinese authorities bluffing?" From what that journalist can determine, "there is no real way to tell beyond waiting it out." This sort of situation creates real logistical issues for many reporters. If the government decides on the day before the visa's expiration date that a journalist can stay, the journalist may have already shipped home their personal effects and reporting equipment. For others with families, it is even more devastating. The source asked to have his identity protected because his is not authorized by the media company he works for to speak publicly about the issue.

As it stands right now, the reporter told me, one correspondent was specifically told by a Public Security Bureau official that no visas would be renewed for their organization. It was, notably, a verbal conversation, so in the event that authorities reverse their decision there will be no proof of intended interference. Beyond that one verbal communication, there does not seem to be anything else from government officials to explain what is happening or why.

It has worked this way in the past, too. Officials do not offer any information or the notion of a directive from above. Journalists simply wait in "visa purgatory" with endless phone calls and no information. And local police have threatened journalists with visa revocation before—see CPJ's March 2011 report, "China threatens foreign journalists for 'illegal' reporting." Conditions are not improving, and not just on the issue of visas. The FCCC's Annual Working Conditions Survey, published in May 2013, found that 98 percent of respondents do not think reporting conditions

in China meet international standards, and 70 percent feel conditions have worsened or stayed the same as the year before. Only three respondents said they think things are getting better. (The FCCC's full survey is attached in Annex 2, below.)

Have the deteriorating conditions and the tactic of possible visa restrictions made news organizations step back from reporting on stories that might anger China's government? Few reporters with whom I spoke in China would admit to not reporting fully on a situation either for fear of retaliation by the government or because the government specifically told them not to report. Bloomberg has strongly denied claims made by one of its employees that it killed a story for fear of angering Chinese authorities, as reported in *The New York Times*.

One reporter, who works for a large news organization, did say that the atmosphere amid the recent visa issues is daunting: "This action is definitely sending waves of fear into many smaller papers around the globe who have smaller staffs and budgets. In many ways, I think they have already actually been successful in creating fear-driven self-censorship and symbolically showing the Western press that it doesn't matter who you are, we can kick you out," the reporter wrote to me.

A question remains: If the government does refuse to allow current visa holders to stay, does that mean the number of positions for a large news organization will be reduced, or will other correspondents be allowed to take their place? Reporters in Beijing told me it would be fair to assume that if they were forced to leave it would take a long time to fill their slot and at best there would be a long "bumpy" transition period.

CPJ is glad that Vice President Joseph Biden raised the issue of visas and their link to the freedom to report in China while he was there this month. Diplomatic engagement like that is among the best ways to address such problems. But we are concerned by new calls that, if foreign journalists in China are not granted visa renewals, there should be retaliation from the United States (see *The Washington Post's* December 8 editorial, "China's strong-arm tactics toward U.S. media merit a response.") It is worthwhile to note that the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China opposes such tactics as "not appropriate." And CPJ opposed similar calls when they arose in 2012. Then, H.R. 2899, the Chinese Media Reciprocity Act of 2011, was under discussion by the Subcommittee on Immigration Policy and Enforcement. The bill sought to reduce the number of visas available to journalists (and their families) working in the United States for 13 Chinese state-controlled publications. The aim was to pressure Beijing into allowing more Voice of America reporters into China, where Voice of America was allowed only two China visas to cover a country of more than 1.3 billion people.

China says it accredits 650 foreign journalists in total to work within its borders—not just those from the United States. That number seems realistic, though there is no way to check it. And there are a growing number of Chinese journalists working around the world, not just in the United States, as China seeks to extend its "soft" diplomatic power. It would be disastrous if democratic countries were to launch a round of modern-era Cold War tit-for-tat accreditation wars aimed at restricting foreign journalists. I checked recently with a Chinese journalist based in the United States, and that person said there are no visa problems for Chinese journalists working as far as that person is aware. Visa applications are handled from Beijing, the reporter told me, and other than a face-to-face interview with an immigration official, journalists are not involved in the process, and there are no hassles. In the United States and other open democracies, it should stay that way.

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#### ANNEX 1

##### FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF CHINA YEAR-END STATEMENT (RELEASED DECEMBER 11, 2013)

Reviewing the conditions under which foreign reporters work in China, the FCCC is disturbed to note a number of negative trends over the past year.

– In particular, we have found that the Chinese authorities are increasingly using the denial of visas, or delays in their approval, in an apparent effort to influence journalists' coverage. No correspondents for the *New York Times* and Bloomberg have yet been able to renew their annual residence visas, which have been subject to unusual and unexplained delays this year.

The *New York Times*, since it published articles concerning the finances of a senior Chinese leader last year, has also been unable to secure resident journalist visas for either its bureau chief, Philip Pan, who has been waiting for over 18 months,

or correspondent Chris Buckley, who has been in Hong Kong awaiting a visa for a year.

Paul Mooney, a veteran correspondent known for his reporting on human rights issues, was denied the visa that would have allowed him to take a job in Beijing for Reuters. Melissa Chan, Al Jazeera's English language service correspondent, was denied a visa in May 2012 and effectively expelled.

The authorities have given no public explanation for their actions, leading to the impression that they have been taken in reprisal for reporting that displeased the government. Chinese officials have said that foreign media in China must abide by Chinese laws and regulations, but they have never explained which laws and regulations Pan, Buckley, Mooney and Chan, or their employers, are said to have violated.

– New rules, introduced this year, according to which the police take 15 business days (three weeks) to process visa applications, mean that reporters cannot leave the country during this period, making the work of those responsible for Asian regional coverage unnecessarily difficult.

– The key rule governing foreign journalists in China—that they need only obtain the consent of their interviewees for an interview to be legal—has been progressively weakened in practice.

The authorities have, for example, spontaneously designated locations, such as Tiananmen Square or the scenes of social unrest, where they claim the rule does not apply and where special permission is said to be required to film or report. FCCC members also report being told by local officials in different parts of China that citizens' employers must approve interview requests.

We are aware of a number of cases in which Chinese citizens have been intimidated by police or local officials, or instructed not to grant interviews to foreign correspondents. The Foreign Ministry has publicly assured reporters that this is a violation of rules governing their work, but we have seen no evidence that the central government has taken any steps to enforce those rules.

Large swathes of Chinese territory remain effectively out of bounds to foreign correspondents. Although a handful of resident foreign correspondents and some journalists visiting from abroad have been allowed into Tibet this year, strict restrictions have been imposed on press coverage there.

Even in areas that are not explicitly off limits, such as Tibetan-inhabited areas of Gansu, western Sichuan, and Qinghai, FCCC members have faced obstruction by local authorities that makes working there extremely difficult, especially since it dissuades local residents from talking to reporters. Journalists seeking to report on unrest in Xinjiang have routinely been turned back by checkpoint police telling them that they are forbidden to be there.

– The police and other security services continue to apply pressure to foreign correspondents' news assistants. This takes the form of requests for information about correspondents' activities, threats and general harassment.

– On at least two occasions this year Chinese embassy staff in foreign capitals have approached the headquarters of foreign media and complained about their China-based correspondents' coverage, demanding that their reports be removed from their websites and suggesting that they produce more positive China coverage.

The Chinese authorities have repeatedly said that they are keen to improve foreign reporters' working conditions. We eagerly await the fruits of their efforts.

FCCC Administration Office  
E-mail: fccadmin@gmail.com  
General Manager: fccgm@gmail.com  
Website: www.fccchina.org

\* \* \*

## ANNEX 2

### FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF CHINA

#### ANNUAL WORKING CONDITIONS SURVEY (RELEASED JULY 10, 2013)

The past year has seen unprecedented examples of investigative journalism by western reporters in China. Unfortunately, the Chinese government has increasingly resorted to threats and intimidation against foreign media, according to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China's annual "Reporting Conditions" survey\* of its members, and its review of incidents reported over the last 12 months.

The FCCC survey, carried out in May 2013, found that 98 percent of respondents do not think reporting conditions in China meet international standards, and 70

percent feel conditions have worsened or stayed the same as the year before. Only three respondents say they think things are getting better; the rest have not been here long enough to have an opinion.

Among the FCCC's greatest concerns are

- government retaliation against foreign media which have incurred official displeasure
- threats to the physical safety of reporters whose reports have offended the authorities
- increased cyber harassment and hacking attacks on foreign journalists
- continuing restrictions on journalists' movements in Tibetan-inhabited areas of China
- official harassment of sources
- official intimidation of reporters' Chinese assistants

The survey found 63 cases in which police officers or unknown persons impeded foreign reporters from doing their work, including nine cases in which reporters were manhandled or subjected to physical force. This represents a welcome drop from last year, but remains unacceptable.

*"Attacks on journalists, those working with them and their sources have replaced detention by uniformed police."* A US radio correspondent.

*"It has now become normal that uniformed police stand with arms folded as plainclothes 'thugs' appear. The thugs are often violent. I have received many bruises during these incidents."* A British TV correspondent.

#### OFFICIAL RETALIATION AND INTIMIDATION

Victims of government retaliation include The New York Times and Bloomberg. The New York Times English and Chinese language websites are blocked in China and the newspaper has been unable to secure journalist visas for either Bureau Chief Philip Pan or correspondent Chris Buckley. Bloomberg has also been unable to secure journalist visas in order to replace its correspondents and the company has reportedly suffered significant commercial harm from a drop in sales of its data terminals.

Three other media companies, France 24, ARD TV (Germany) and the Financial Times have also come under unusual Chinese government pressure after publishing news reports that angered the Chinese authorities. Chinese embassy officials in Paris, Berlin and London lodged direct complaints with senior editors, in an apparent effort to pressure them into restraining their reporters in Beijing.

Although routine delays in the provision of journalist visas appear to have shortened in recent months, ten percent of survey respondents reported difficulties in obtaining official press accreditation or a journalist visa on account of their reporting or that of their predecessors.

*"My paper has been working on my accreditation since August last year. The authorities stated that the difficulties were due to the work of my predecessor."* A European newspaper reporter.

Intimidation can also be more particular and more threatening. One foreign reporter whose articles angered elements of the Chinese government was told by the manager of the building where he lives that security officials had visited and asked the manager questions about the reporter's family life, the layout of his apartment, where his children went to school and other personal questions.

#### CYBER ATTACKS

Cyber attacks on FCCC members have become routine. Though we cannot identify the origin of these efforts to install malware and spyware on our computers, the club's cyber-security consultant has found that many of the attacks are targeted deliberately at foreign correspondents based in China.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL REPORTING RESTRICTIONS

Restrictions on foreign journalists' access to "sensitive" areas of the country remain widespread, arbitrary and unexplained. Reporters have been told by officials in Qinghai that all Tibetan-inhabited areas of China are off-limits to the foreign press. Though such a blanket ban is not always applied, local officials have repeatedly interfered with reporting work.

*"I was road-blocked, denied access and constantly followed and monitored in Qinghai from the day of my arrival."* A French newspaper correspondent.

## HARASSMENT OF SOURCES

Previous FCCC reports on working conditions in China have complained about the official harassment of Chinese citizens who talk to reporters, which they are free to do if they so choose according to the Chinese government regulations governing foreign journalists' activities. Such harassment continues at the same level as ever: the survey found 23 such cases in 2012–2013.

*"After reporting on self-immolations in Qinghai I learned that my local fixer had been harassed by the police. They showed him all the Skype and phone contacts he had had with foreign journalists. He seemed scared."* A European newspaper reporter.

## HARASSMENT OF EMPLOYEES

30 percent of respondents to the FCCC survey said that their Chinese assistants had been called in by the police or other security forces to "drink tea", a euphemism for an interrogation. The employees are commonly asked to inform the police about reporters' activities and plans. Two such assistants have reported that their relatives have also come under official pressure on account of their work.

## ADDENDUM

The following cases of sometimes violent interference, reported to the FCCC over the past year, illustrate the difficulties that foreign correspondents in China face.

## February 2013

## German TV crew attacked

A TV crew belonging to ARD television, narrowly avoided serious injury when two men, apparently linked to local authorities in Hebei province, attacked their vehicle with baseball bats, shattering the windshield, after a high speed chase down a major highway near the city of Sanhe, 50 km east of Beijing.

ARD correspondent Christine Adelhardt, accompanied by two German colleagues and two Chinese staff, had been filming in the village of Da Yan Ge Zhuang for a report on urbanisation, one of the incoming Chinese government's major challenges and a process that has often provoked disputes over land ownership.

"We were filming the village square, where you could see old style farmers' houses next to a newly-built mansion behind a wall and high-rise buildings in the background," said Adelhardt, when a car drew up next to them. The car's driver began filming the TV crew.

When the crew left, two cars, later joined by at least two others, gave chase, trying to force the Germans' minivan off the road and to deliberately cause a collision. They forced the ARD driver to stop at one point, whereupon five or six men surrounded the car, attempted to get in, and hammered on the windows with their fists.

The crew got away, but were pursued, forced off the road and onto the sidewalk, rammed, and made to stop. Two men from the pursuing vehicles attacked the minivan with baseball bats, shattering its windshield, before the ARD driver was able to get away again by bulldozing his way past a car parked in front of the ARD van.

The crew then came across two motorcycle policemen and asked them for help. Their pursuers caught up with them, and again began smashing and punching holes in the car's windshield, despite the police officers' attempts to control them.

A local resident who witnessed the scene later told Adelhardt that one of the cars involved in the pursuit belonged to the Da Yan Ge Zhuang village Communist party secretary.

Eventually, police reinforcements arrived, and escorted the ARD crew to a local police station, where Adelhardt and her colleagues were questioned. Adelhardt saw a number of the men who had attacked her car at the police station, but was not sure whether they were detained. When she asked to file a charge of attempted homicide, she was assured by a local official that such charges had already been laid against the men.

But a policeman told her that the investigation had found that villagers had been "offended" by the TV crew's presence and that they should have asked permission to film.

Chinese government regulations governing foreign journalists in China state expressly that such prior permission is not required to film in public spaces.

**July 2012**

## Japanese reporter beaten

Atsushi Okudera, a correspondent for Asahi Shinbun in Shanghai, was injured after police officers pushed him to the ground and kicked him in the head and about the body while he was covering the mass demonstration on July 28 in Nantong's Qidong district. His camera was confiscated.

**December 2012**

## German correspondent's equipment ruined

Der Spiegel correspondent Bernhard Zand and his Chinese assistant were reporting on the case of five boys who died of carbon monoxide poisoning in Bijie, Guizhou. In the course of their work they met the journalist who had first broken this story and who had then disappeared for several weeks, Li Yuanlong.

They were followed throughout their stay in Bijie by unidentified men. On the evening of Dec. 29th they checked into the Kempinski Hotel in Guiyang. When they returned from supper to their rooms they found that Bernhard's tablet computer and an iPhone had been destroyed by submersion in water (they were still wet), all the photos on an SD memory card in his computer had been deleted, and a large number of files had been deleted from his laptop. Most of the files on his assistant's laptop, in the next-door room, had also been deleted.

Bernhard filed a complaint the next morning with the local police, but their investigations did not uncover the culprits. The Kempinski Hotel's security chief said the CCTV cameras with a clear view of the doors to the two rooms in question had not recorded any pictures at the relevant time, and hotel staff said that the hotel does not keep logs of guestrooms' electronic door locks.

**March 2013**

## Hong Kong journalists beaten in Beijing

On March 8, two Hong Kong journalists were beaten outside the home of Liu Xia, the wife of jailed Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo. A group of unidentified men beat TVB cameraman Tam Wing-man and Now TV cameraman Wong Kim-fai, as they were filming an activist's attempt to visit Liu Xia, who is under house arrest at her apartment building.

The attackers, who did not identify themselves, suddenly appeared from around a corner, shouted at the group of journalists outside the building, and demanded that they stop filming. One of the Hong Kong cameramen was punched in the face and pushed to the ground, while the attackers attempted to confiscate the other's camera and hit him in the head.

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\*About the survey: The FCCC conducts an annual survey on reporting conditions. The survey was sent to 232 FCCC correspondent members in Spring 2013, of whom 98 replied. Figures indicate an absolute number of responses, unless otherwise indicated. When percentages are used, they reflect all respondents to that specific question. Not all respondents answered every question. Data may be used if credit is given to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC).

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF SARAH COOK

DECEMBER 11, 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman and other members of the commission for convening this very timely and important roundtable discussion.

In my remarks this afternoon, I will focus on three aspects of the Chinese government's relationship with international media that reach beyond the obstructions targeting individual journalists based inside China.

- The use of collective punishment tactics to impede the work of news organizations and discourage the dissemination of certain critical reporting.
- The aspects of these dynamics that take place outside China's borders.
- The long-term impact of these pressures on news coverage, human rights, and media sustainability.

My remarks are primarily drawn from a report I authored that was published in October by the National Endowment for Democracy's Center for International Media

Assistance titled *The Long Shadow of Chinese Censorship*. The full report is available online but I would like to submit the chapter on international media and another segment for the record alongside my testimony.

#### COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

The impact of the obstacles other panelists have noted reaches beyond an individual journalist's career or physical safety, affecting the broader ability of news organizations to report from China. When American television correspondent Melissa Chan's visa renewal was refused, al-Jazeera English had to shutter its presence in China because no visa was granted for a replacement.<sup>1</sup> Bureau chiefs from U.S. outlets like the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* have also been unsuccessful in securing visas, though their colleagues still report from inside the country.<sup>2</sup> Several correspondents have told the Foreign Correspondent's Club of China that officials implied their visa delay was due to their predecessor's reporting.<sup>3</sup>

These examples reflect a broader phenomenon whereby the targets of Chinese sanctions expand beyond specifically offending content or an individual journalist to collective retaliation against an entire outlet, sometimes with notable financial implications. The Chinese government's multi-faceted reaction to investigative reports by Bloomberg and the *New York Times* in 2012 about large financial holdings by the kin of then Vice President Xi Jinping and Premier Wen Jiabao exemplify these dynamics.<sup>4</sup>

In both instances, the Chinese authorities chose to block the outlet's entire website indefinitely, an unusual move against major news organizations.<sup>5</sup> This was despite the capacity of the country's refined Internet filters to block individual pages within a website—a tactic employed regularly to restrict access to articles deemed sensitive within otherwise tolerated sources. At present, both sites remained inaccessible from China. As the previous panelists have noted, both organizations have also faced significant challenges renewing or gaining new visas for their correspondents, including those uninvolved in the offending investigations.

Reflecting their varied business operations in China, the official retaliation against the two outlets manifested differently. For the *Times*, the blocking of not only its English but also of its newly launched Chinese-language website produced palpable financial losses. Overnight, the company's stock lost 20 percent of its value, though it slowly recovered over the following months.<sup>6</sup> The outlet was also forced to renegotiate agreements with numerous advertisers, causing revenue loss.<sup>7</sup>

Bloomberg's English-only website does not have a broad audience within China. The blocking thus seems motivated less by a wish to damage Bloomberg's access to Chinese readers, than by a desire to signal that finance-oriented news sources are not exempt from wholesale blocking if they embark on sensitive political investigations.<sup>8</sup> More central to Bloomberg's operations in China are its financial data terminals, used by large banks and firms.<sup>9</sup> The public gesture of blocking its website was combined with other threatening measures including having security agents tail some Bloomberg employees and Chinese bankers cancelling previously arranged meetings with the outlet's editor-in-chief.<sup>10</sup>

Such actions appear to have deterred at least some would-be business partners and clients.<sup>11</sup> According to the Foreign Correspondents Club of China, Bloomberg "reportedly suffered significant commercial harm from a drop in sales of its data terminals."<sup>12</sup>

#### GEOGRAPHIC REACH NOT LIMITED TO CHINA

The geographic reach of obstructions to international news reporting is increasingly not limited to China. This trend manifests in several ways.

In early 2013, several news organizations—including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*—publicized that they had been the victims of complex cyberattacks by Chinese hackers. The attacks not only targeted individual China-based journalists, but also infiltrated the companies' servers outside China. The attackers apparently wished to obtain pre-publication warning on reports critical of the Chinese government and to identify sources of information provided to foreign correspondents. Though the attacks could not be conclusively traced to Chinese government entities, several features lend credibility to that assertion.<sup>13</sup>

In other instances, the connection to Chinese government actors has been more explicit as officials take direct action by pressuring international media executives and senior editors to take down or refrain from publishing a critical report.

Both the *New York Times* and Bloomberg were strongly urged to drop the articles about top leaders' family assets when Chinese officials became aware of the upcoming exclusives. After Bloomberg offered the Chinese government an opportunity to

comment two weeks before publication, the Chinese ambassador to the United States met personally with the company's editor-in-chief in Washington alongside other behind-the-scenes pressure.<sup>14</sup>

These pressures are not limited to the United States. In June 2013, the television station France 24 reported that Chinese embassy officials visited its Paris headquarters and met with the chief executive after it aired a brief documentary titled "Seven Days in Tibet." According to Reporters Without Borders, the diplomats denounced the piece and demanded its removal from the station's website, a request the outlet refused.<sup>15</sup> Without providing the full details, the FCCC noted similar incidents occurring in London and Berlin over reporting by the *Financial Times* and ARD TV, respectively.<sup>16</sup>

Chinese security agents and local police have repeatedly harassed foreign journalists in Nepal who were reporting on the treatment of Tibetan refugees. In February 2012, a CNN crew reported that men appearing to be plainclothes Chinese security personnel crossed the border into Nepal and followed them deep into a Nepalese village as they tried to interview residents for a story on Tibetan refugees.<sup>17</sup>

#### LONG-TERM IMPACT

Hard-hitting reporting from China continues to reach newsstands and television screens around the world. Nonetheless, the Chinese government's efforts to thwart independent investigations have taken a toll on international media coverage of the country.

When sources are intimidated into silence, journalists are forced to abandon potentially newsworthy stories—including on health issues like AIDS and deadly asbestos—or invest an inordinate amount of time and money to complete them.<sup>18</sup>

Lack of unimpeded access to regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet has hindered independent investigations of severe crackdowns, enforced disappearances, and torture. Blocked access has sometimes forced overreliance on Chinese state media reports, whose unverified details—on the death toll during ethnic unrest, for example—eventually seep into Western news items as statements of fact. The blocking of foreign correspondents from Tiananmen Square in late October following an attack by a speeding SUV helped reinforce the Chinese government's questionable narrative that this was a premeditated assault by Uighur "terrorists."<sup>19</sup>

Psychological elements add another dimension, as fears over physical safety, access to the country or family privacy can make reporters think twice about what they write. According to freelance journalist Paul Mooney, who at the time of our interview was awaiting a visa (which has since been denied), a cautious mood has settled over the foreign press corps over the past year:

I'm sure that a lot of journalists would deny being intimidated by such tactics . . . but I'm positive that some people buckle and keep away from certain "sensitive" topics because they're afraid of not getting a visa . . . Recently, some colleagues have encouraged me to stop Tweeting and making comments about China on other social media and academic list serves, which we assume are being monitored. It's in the back of my mind all the time, but I've not curtailed what I do.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, collective punishment tactics generate conflicting stances among departments within a news organization, as sales are potentially damaged or boosted by editorial decisions.

International media have oftentimes defiantly resisted direct and indirect pressures to alter their content, despite potential financial losses.

But not always. Even well respected outlets have faced allegations of self-censorship, sometimes with a lag time from when Chinese pressure was initially applied. The recent reports of apparent decisions by Bloomberg executives to curb the publication of stories investigating the links between Chinese tycoons and the political elite are one such example.<sup>21</sup> In 2012, the *Washington Post's* then ombudsman, Patrick B. Pexton, questioned the paper's handling of an interview with Xi Jinping that was printed verbatim based on Chinese-dictated questions and replies. He noted the *Post's* difficulty securing visas and the receipt of significant income from a Chinese-state run advertorial insert as pressure points.<sup>22</sup>

More broadly, a 2009 academic study found that reports about the Falun Gong spiritual practice in major Western news outlets and wire services were few and far between, despite the ongoing scale and severity of abuses suffered by its adherents.<sup>23</sup> The author cited self-censorship and CCP obstructions as two factors contributing to the phenomenon. Despite periodic stories, this trend has largely continued. Over the past year, dozens (and more likely hundreds) of Falun Gong adherents have been detained and sentenced to prison, in some cases for up to 12 years.<sup>24</sup> Yet there has been almost no coverage in major news outlets of the crackdown, despite

its implications for how one might interpret other headline-grabbing developments like reform of the labor camp system.

The existence of self-censorship is difficult to conclusively document, but such incidents are nonetheless a reminder of the CCP's capacity to influence Western media reporting on China. As Pexton notes, "There is interdependence in the relationship, and constant negotiation and compromise. The Chinese know it, and they take advantage of it."<sup>25</sup>

Much is at stake as this transnational contestation unfolds. Independent media outlets facing Chinese reprisals experience rising costs and loss of advertising revenue in an already competitive and financially challenging industry. Individual reporters encounter restrictive editorial policies, threats to their livelihood, and even physical injury. News consumers outside China are deprived of information for assessing the political stability of a major trading partner, responding to health and environmental crises, or taking action to support Chinese people's quest for a more free and just society.

For Chinese people, the stakes are even higher. In the age of microblogs, circumvention tools, international travel, and satellite television, overseas media outlets offer a vital source of information on matters with life-or-death consequences, be they torture, environmental pollution, or threats to public health. Their ability to function and report uncensored news promotes transparency and accountability in an opaque and arbitrary political system.

Absent a concerted international response to Chinese government obstructions, the situation is likely to further deteriorate as China's international role expands alongside a deep sense of Communist Party insecurity at home. Meanwhile, some measures initially aimed at restricting coverage of China could potentially be employed to affect reporting on important events in other societies. At one point, the heightened activity of Chinese hackers who had infiltrated the *New York Times* global server on the night of the 2012 U.S. presidential election reportedly prompted fears among senior editors that the site could be compromised at a critical time. Ultimately, the hackers were focused on the narrow objective of tracking information related to an exposé about the financial holdings of Premier Wen Jiabao's family, but the incident highlighted the potential for cyberattacks by the Chinese government or its sympathizers to impact coverage of political consequence in the United States.<sup>26</sup>

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of actions that the U.S. government might take in response, Vice President Biden's raising of this issue both privately and publicly during his recent visit to China is a welcome start. However, such statements must be backed up with real action and sanctions if the Chinese government does not heed such warnings. Otherwise, the United States risks sending the message that its concern over this issue is not genuine and that it is unwilling to put real political and diplomatic weight behind protecting the freedoms of its journalists—an outcome likely to only embolden Chinese government hostility towards foreign media.

As the United States government explores possible responses, Freedom House would strongly recommend taking a multi-lateral approach and consulting with like-minded government to formulate a united stance. Although most of the examples cited today have involved U.S.-based media, this is hardly a problem limited to American news organizations. There are hundreds of foreign correspondents based in China from dozens of countries and many of them face similar restrictions. A collective response from the United States, European governments, as well as perhaps Japan and Australia would carry greater weight than a U.S.-only reaction. It would also leave the United States and American journalists less vulnerable to future retaliation.

Thank you again for holding this roundtable and for giving me an opportunity to contribute the above observations to the discussion.

<sup>1</sup>"Al Jazeera English Forced Out of China." Al Jazeera, May 9, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2012/05/201257195136608563.html>.

<sup>2</sup>Foreign Correspondents' Club of China Annual Working Conditions 2013; Will Sommer, "Post's Chinese Visa Fight Ends With a Whimper," City Desk (blog), Washington City Paper, September 17, 2012, <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/citydesk/2012/09/17/posts-chinese-visa-fight-ends-with-a-whimper/>.

<sup>3</sup>Foreign Correspondents' Club of China Annual Working Conditions 2013.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Martina, "Bloomberg Sites Blocked in China Days After Xi Family Wealth Story," Reuters, July 4, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/04/us-china-censorship-bloomberg-idUSBRE86306820120704>; Keith Bradsher, "China Blocks Web Access to Times After Article,"

New York Times, October 25, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/26/world/asia/china-blocks-web-access-to-new-york-times.html>.

<sup>5</sup>Simon Rabinovitch, "China Keeps Up Block on Bloomberg Website," *Financial Times* (London), July 28, 2012, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4965b226-d952-11e1-8529-00144feab49a.html#axzz2aksVfw2D>.

<sup>6</sup>"The New York Times Company," Yahoo! Finance, <http://finance.yahoo.com/q/hp?s=NYT&a=6&b=16&c=1986&d=6&e=17&f=2013&g=d&z=66&y=132>.

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Sullivan, "Great Journalism' That Has Unwanted Business Impact in China," *New York Times*, October 26, 2012, <http://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/26/great-journalism-that-has-unwanted-business-impact-in-china/>.

<sup>8</sup>Traditionally, though not always, the Chinese authorities have been more tolerant of critical reporting related to financial and economic matters, compared to political or human rights ones.

<sup>9</sup>Nonetheless, China remains a relatively small market for the terminals, with about 3,000 operating compared to 10,000 in Hong Kong and 100,000 in the United States, according to Howard Winn of the South China Morning Post. Howard Winn, "Sino-Bloomberg Relations Remain Unsettled After Xi Story," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), September 14, 2012, <http://www.scmp.com/business/article/1036193/sino-bloomberg-relations-remain-unsettled-after-xi-story>.

<sup>10</sup>Rabinovitch, "China Keeps Block on Bloomberg."

<sup>11</sup>Ibid; Winn, "Sino-Bloomberg Relations."

<sup>12</sup>Foreign Correspondents' Club of China Annual Working Conditions 2013.

<sup>13</sup>Nicole Perlroth, "Hackers in China Attacked the Times for Last 4 Months," *New York Times*, January 30, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/31/technology/chinese-hackers-infiltrate-new-york-times-computers.html?pagewanted=all>; Jonathan Kaiman, "New York Times Claims Chinese Hackers Hijacked Its Systems," *Guardian* (London), January 31, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/jan/31/new-york-times-chinese-hacked>

<sup>14</sup>Winn, "Sino-Bloomberg Relations."

<sup>15</sup>The journalist who filmed the segment undercover during a seven-day visit to Tibet also received harassing and threatening messages from Chinese diplomats in Thailand while visiting Bangkok. "Chinese Diplomats Threaten French Journalist After Tibet Report," *Reporters Without Borders*, June 11, 2013, <http://en.rsf.org/chine-chinese-diplomats-threaten-french-11-06-2013.44762.html>.

<sup>16</sup>Foreign Correspondents' Club of China Annual Working Conditions.

<sup>17</sup>Sara Sidner, "Is China Pushing Nepal to Crack Down on Tibetans," *CNN*, February 22, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/21/world/asia/china-tibet-nepal>.

<sup>18</sup>Paul Mooney, email communication to author, July 10, 2013.

<sup>19</sup>Sarah Cook, "Be Skeptical of the Official Story on the Tiananmen Car Crash," *Freedom at Issue* (Freedom House blog), November 4, 2013, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/blog/be-skeptical-official-story-tiananmen-car-crash>

<sup>20</sup>Mooney email interview.

<sup>21</sup>Edward Wong, "Bloomberg News is Said to Curb Articles that Might Anger China," *The New York Times*, November 8, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/09/world/asia/bloomberg-news-is-said-to-curb-articles-that-might-anger-china.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/09/world/asia/bloomberg-news-is-said-to-curb-articles-that-might-anger-china.html?_r=0)

<sup>22</sup>Patrick B. Pexton, "Caving to China's Demands," *Washington Post*, February 24, 2012, <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-02-24/opinions/35442979-1-transcript-mutual-benefit-questions>.

<sup>23</sup>Leeshai Lemish, "Media and New Religious Movements: The Case of Falun Gong" (paper, 2009 CESNUR Conference, Salt Lake City, UT, June 11–13, 2009), <http://www.cesnur.org/2009/slc-lemish.htm>.

<sup>24</sup>Interviews with Chinese activists who wished to remain anonymous, November 2013; Falun Dafa Information Center, "Reports Confirm Ongoing Persecution in China Despite Labor Camp Closures," October 10, 2013, <http://www.faluninfo.net/article/1305/Reports-Confirm-Ongoing-Persecution-in-China-Despite-Labor-Camp-Closures/?cid=84>.

<sup>25</sup>Pexton, "Caving to China's Demands."

<sup>26</sup>Perlroth, "Hackers in China" (see n. 13).

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SHERROD BROWN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO;  
CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA (CECC)

DECEMBER 11, 2013

Today I am calling on China to immediately cease its policy of harassing foreign journalists, denying and delaying their visas, and blocking the websites of foreign media in China. If the situation does not improve, we must consider other steps that Congress may take to address the issue.

Our approach is critical. China is the world's most populous country and our second-largest trading partner. It faces daunting challenges, from crippling pollution and widespread corruption, to suppression of the basic freedoms we take for granted. And as we have seen recently, China is increasing its military posture in the region.

What happens in China affects us all.

It is therefore imperative that we have a complete and accurate picture of what is going on there.

But we can't do that without foreign journalists.

If foreign journalists cannot report the news in China, who will investigate the financial dealings of China's top leaders and their families?

Who will report on Tibet and Xinjiang and the plight of human rights activists?

Who will investigate labor conditions at factories that make products sold in America?

It has to be the foreign press because China's own journalists are hamstrung by severe censorship.

That's why China's recent actions to shut down foreign journalists are so troubling.

What's happening now has few precedents.

If 23 reporters don't get their visas by the end of the year, The New York Times and Bloomberg may not be able to cover China at all.

China has now made this a fair trade issue by blocking access to the web sites of The New York Times, Bloomberg, Reuters, and the Wall Street Journal.

And in November, Chinese officials denied a visa to American journalist Paul Mooney after he had been reporting in China for the past 18 years.

For years foreign journalists in China have had to endure periodic beatings, interrogations, and harassment just to do their job.

But what is new is that China is now threatening to use its weapon of last resort—closing the country off to the rest of the world.

We must do all we can to prevent that from happening.

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## SUBMISSION FOR THE RECORD

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAUL MOONEY, FREELANCE JOURNALIST

DECEMBER 11, 2013

I'm very happy to have the opportunity to speak at this roundtable and I would like to thank Senator Sherrod Brown and Representative Christopher Smith for providing this platform to discuss the serious deterioration of the treatment of foreign journalists in China.

On November 8, the Chinese government informed Reuters that my application for a journalist visa had been denied, ending an eight month wait for my visa, and my 18-year career as a foreign correspondent in China. No reason was given for the refusal, but a 90-minute visa interview at the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco last April focused on my views on human rights, rule of law, the Dalai Lama, and Tibet. At the end of the interview, the consular official said to me: "If we allow you to return to China, we hope you're reporting will be more objective."

Although Beijing made some concessions to the media to win the right to host the 2008 Olympics, as soon as the Games were over, the government began to tighten controls again. In 2009, we began to see an increasing number of foreign journalists who faced extended delays in getting their visas approved. In these cases, the journalists had in the previous 12 months reported on sensitive issues, and while reasons were not usually given by the government, it was clear to the people involved why they were being targeted. Beijing has long used the threat of expulsion as a means of influencing international journalists in China.

In 2012, Melissa Chan, an American journalist working for Al Jazeera, was refused a visa renewal and was forced to leave the country. She was the first foreign journalist to be kicked out of China in 13 years. Such decisions are extremely rare, and it signaled a worrisome shift in China's handling of the foreign media. In addition, Phil Pan and Chris Buckley of the New York Times, and a handful of reporters from Bloomberg, have been waiting for more than a year to get visas to move to China to do reporting.

The situation has dramatically worsened in recent months, with some two dozen journalists from the New York Times and Bloomberg today facing the possibility of not getting their visas renewed, which would have a serious impact on the ability of these news organizations to report about China.

China has given no reason for failing to approve these visa applications, only saying that this was done in accordance with Chinese laws and regulations. However, Beijing has not provided any examples of wrongdoing, leading to speculation that this is in retaliation for reporting that displeased senior Chinese officials.

These drastic actions may have a strong impact on other journalists in China, who will now worry that their reporting on sensitive issues will result in expulsion from the country.

I'd like to first state that my reporting, and that of my colleagues, is not anti-China. Many of us have spent years learning about China and studying the language, and we have a deep affection for China and the Chinese people.

I reported accurately what I saw and heard from Chinese people: the parents of kidnapped children, AIDS victims, people in cancer villages, migrant workers, poor farmers, the handicapped and others who have been left behind by the so-called Chinese economic miracle. The Chinese government may not like what I reported, but during my close to two decades in China, it never once challenged the accuracy of my reporting.

During my last two years working in Beijing, from 2010 to 2012, I was not given the normal one-year visa, but instead three- and six-month visas. Few journalists get such limited visas and the purpose is to make reporters self-censor in order to be allowed to remain in China.

Foreign journalists in China often work under psychological pressure. The government strives to conceal the truth about China, and this makes the job of journalists very difficult. I got a taste of this the first week I arrived in China to work in 1994, when police at the Bureau of Entry and Exit responsible for issuing journalist visas took me into a back room and sternly warned me not to violate any laws. What they really meant was I shouldn't write about things the government didn't want me to cover. Weeks later, the police officer in charge of monitoring me, stopped me from entering a Protestant church on a Sunday morning, where Chinese Christians had been outspoken in defense of the right to freely practice their faith, a right that's guaranteed in the Chinese Constitution.

Foreign journalists in China play a daily game of cat and mouse with the Chinese police and security agencies. Our movements are closely monitored, a task made easy by the J (for journalist) visas in our passports that are like a scarlet letter. They know whenever we purchase an airline ticket and they're notified as soon as we check into a hotel anywhere in China. They also use our mobile phones to monitor our movements and even listen in to our conversations. It's a common practice among foreign corresponders in China not to take their mobile phones with them when they do sensitive interviews because it's believed the police have the ability to use them as a listening device, even if the mobile phone is turned off and the battery is removed. When traveling, journalists sometimes turn off their phones or frequently change their phone cards to limit the ability of the police to monitor them. In some cases, Chinese news assistants are invited to "have tea" with security agents or police, who pressure them to report on their bosses, such as which stories they plan to report on, people they interview and travel plans.

During a brief flirtation with the Jasmine Revolution in Beijing in 2011, foreign journalists in Beijing were jostled by plainclothes police when they tried to visit the area where Chinese were expected to carry out silent protests. Stephen Engle, a reporter for Bloomberg Television, was beaten in public view on the streets of Beijing. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied this a few days later, despite the fact that a video proved the beating's occurrence. Colleagues were warned not to go to the protest site over the following weeks, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs openly warning journalists that their visas might not be renewed if they disobeyed this request. Police called the homes of journalists to warn them not to cover this event, and in a few cases, police actually turned up at the homes of foreign journalist to issue stern warnings.

Traveling can also be dangerous. It's common for local officials or police to detain foreign journalists while they're working. I almost always traveled alone to do reporting, and when covering sensitive stories I often worried about being detained and having my notes and photographs confiscated. My wife and two daughters also worried about me as they knew there were risks involved in the reporting I did.

While it's difficult to ascertain the source of some things, our computers are frequently attacked with malware, and in some cases, journalists and their families are threatened physically via phone calls and emails. One colleague told me recently of being called into police stations on two occasions, where she was shouted at, threatened and filmed during the process.

More troubling for me, was the intimidation of the people I came into contact with during my reporting. An important Chinese rule governing foreign journalists, the result of the Olympics concessions, says that foreign journalists only need to obtain the permission of interviewees for an interview to be legal. In reality, this often is not the case. Journalists are frequently physically prevented from speaking to Chinese and sources are often threatened or punished for speaking to us. In one recent incident, Ilham Tohti, a prominent university economist, was harassed by police, who rammed into his car while his family was sitting in it. The police allegedly told him it was because he had spoken to foreign journalists.

I often worried that people would get into trouble for speaking to me. In several cases, I later received phone calls from people I'd interviewed, telling me they'd been visited by police, and in at least two cases, people told me that they were briefly detained by the police, including a taxi driver who had no idea who I was and who had not helped me in any way.

Tibet is completely off limits to foreign journalists, who can only travel there with a special permit that's quite difficult to obtain. I've applied several times for permission to travel to Tibet, but I've never gotten permission. Even when reporting on Tibetan areas outside of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, journalists are often restricted. For example, I have been prevented by police from entering Tibetan areas in Gansu province. And although Xinjiang is theoretically open to the media, in some cases the provincial government requires that journalists get special permission before reporting there, which is a violation of China's own regulations governing journalists. This seriously impedes the ability of the foreign media to report freely in these areas.

During a trip to Kashgar, in Muslim-dominated Xinjiang province, police arrived at my hotel within 15 minutes of my arrival, and I was followed the entire time I was there. During another visit, Xinjiang police forced me to check out of my hotel shortly after I arrived, and they forced me move into a hotel designated for foreign journalists.

Over the next three days, I was not allowed to leave the hotel without a police escort. The officers who stayed with me from morning to night made sure I didn't speak to any Uyghur people and they didn't allow me to take any photographs. At the time, tensions were high in the area; armed police marched through the streets,

and truckloads of soldiers crisscrossed the city. The government obviously didn't want anyone to report on this. On the fourth day, police officials put me on a train and sent me out of Kashgar.

When I was reporting last year in an AIDS village, local officials entered the farm house where I was conducting an interview just minutes after my arrival. Five of the six people in that family had contracted AIDS as a result of selling their blood to illegal blood collection centers set up by local governments. As I didn't want to get the family into trouble—although they agreed to speak with me, and realized the risk—I left the village immediately. Shortly after getting into our car and driving off, the AIDS victim who had been accompanying me, received a phone call from officials in her village insisting that she return home immediately. I completely avoided other AIDS villages because I was told that swarms of police were on the lookout for both Chinese and foreign journalists attempting to enter these areas. As a result, AIDS victims who were keen to speak with me, traveled to nearby towns to meet with me. I also made secret visits to seriously ill AIDS victims in rural hospitals, but I was kicked out of one hospital after hospital officials realized I was there. On my final day in one town, I barely left the hotel after someone tipped me off that police were coming to my hotel to question me. I wanted to leave before they arrived so that my notes and photographs would not be destroyed or confiscated, which would have been a serious setback in my reporting on this issue.

Foreign journalists who work in China all have had similar experiences.

It's important that the world be well-informed about what's going on in China, not just in terms of economic and business news, but also about many other issues that have an impact outside of China's borders, and which affect people around the world. In recent years, China has tried to minimize or cover up issues such as AIDS, milk contamination, tainted animal foods, toxic toothpaste, dangerous pirated products, and heavy metals pollution of rice, vegetables and fruits. These are issues that can directly affect the well-being of consumers and citizens around the world and journalists should have the right to write about these issues.

It's important to note that China's attempt to control the message is not limited to just the foreign media. Its own journalists and citizens lack freedom of expression, many prominent international scholars are refused visas to travel to China, and those who are given access often worry about crossing some invisible line. International companies, organizations and NGOs are intimidated and thus often reluctant to speak honestly for fear of being criticized.

As a result, the international media is often the only source of objective reporting about China, for both the world and China itself. In many cases, reports by the international media filter back into China, providing Chinese citizens with news they may not otherwise have had access to. In fact, Chinese officials themselves would not be aware of some serious issues if they were not reported by the international media. If this voice is silenced, the world will be seriously limited in its ability to understand China.

In the past, governments and organizations have tried to use polite persuasion to convince China to stop its intimidation of the international media. Unfortunately, this has not worked. In fact, the situation has seriously deteriorated in recent years. I don't think that China will change its attitude unless some stronger steps are taken to stop its unfair treatment of the media.

Many people are opposed to a tit-for-tat visa policy against Chinese journalists, arguing that this would go against the traditional American respect for freedom of the media. I don't want to see my Chinese colleagues prevented from reporting in the United States. However, delaying visas for Chinese journalists or for media and propaganda officials who are not involved in the daily work of journalism would send a clear signal to Beijing.

Despite arguments that reciprocal policies can't have any impact on China, there are precedents for this. I've heard of several cases in which foreign governments have delayed issuing visas to Chinese journalists and officials in retaliation for such policies, and in these cases, China immediately backed down.

I'm concerned that Beijing has been emboldened by the failure of governments and news organizations to challenge its unfair treatment of the media, and that the situation will worsen unless some concrete actions are taken.

The Chinese government is able to act the way it does because media organizations and foreign governments have been reluctant to go public with such abuses, instead relying on polite diplomacy behind closed doors. Something can be done to improve this situation, but it's going to take more than just quietly expressing displeasure.

Some two dozen American journalists at the New York Times and Bloomberg News are now facing imminent expulsion over the coming days and weeks, a move

that would cripple the ability of these two US news organizations to continue to function in China and provide the world with accurate news that people need.

It's urgent that the US government immediately adopt measures to deal with this rapidly worsening situation.

Thank you.

